

**American Nursery & Landscape Association
American Public Gardens Association
City of Chicago Bureau of Forestry
The Davey Institute
Florida Native Plant Society
Grantham Foundation for the Protection of the Environment
Greenspace-the Cambria Land Trust
Massachusetts Association of Campground Directors
National Association of State Foresters
National Plant Board
National Plant Diagnostic Network
The Nature Conservancy
North American Maple Syrup Council
Oregon Invasive Species Council
Society of American Florists
Society of American Foresters
Society of Municipal Arborists
Virginia Native Plant Society**

September 15, 2011

The Honorable Frank Lucas
Committee on Agriculture
United States House of Representatives
2311 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Committee on Agriculture
United States House of Representatives
2211 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Farm Bill Actions to Address Forest Pests

Dear Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Peterson:

In adopting the 2008 Farm Bill, the Congress included Title X, Horticulture and Organic Agriculture, Section 10201, Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention, and Section 10202, National Clean Plant Network. These provisions recognize the importance of the specialty crop segment of American agriculture.

These provisions directed the Secretary of Agriculture to make available Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) funds to provide badly needed stability and flexibility in funding programs vital to preventing introduction and spread of plant pests that threaten agriculture and the environment, including specialty crops and nursery and fruit/nut production. The funds of Section 10201 have been allocated to six goal areas, as follows:

- Enhance plant pest/disease analysis and survey
- Target domestic inspection activities at vulnerable points in the safeguarding continuum
- Enhance and strengthen pest identification and technology
- Safeguard nursery production
- Conduct outreach and education to increase public understanding, acceptance, and support of plant pest and disease eradication and control efforts
- Enhance mitigation capabilities

The funds implementing Section 10202 are being used to establish a network of clean plant centers in the U.S. to ensure that safe, disease-free plant stock can be provided to orchards, vineyards and other growers, reducing the risk of spreading disease in those segments of agriculture.

We urge you to continue these programs. America's agricultural productivity and the American environment itself are threatened by a growing number of introduced insects and pathogens – 58 new or reintroduced plant pests were detected just in 2009. The §10201 and §10202 programs are vitally important to curtailing future introductions and enhancing our effective response to those that do enter the country.

Two examples might illustrate why we support continuation of this program. Black walnut standing timber has an estimated value of \$500 billion; the tree's nuts have additional value. The meat of the nut is a healthy food with a niche market; the shells have several industrial uses, primarily as abrasives for such uses as metal polishes, skin cleansers, and oil drilling. One company in Missouri annually buys 25,000 pounds of nuts from people in more than a dozen states, providing added income to landowners. Black walnut trees are now threatened by a recently detected disease complex. Funding through the §10201 program could help develop effective means to detect the insect disease vector and other strategies for reducing the disease's impact on this important rural resource.

Second, oaks and other valuable hardwood trees throughout the East could be severely affected if the sudden oak death pathogen is introduced to the region via trade in infected nursery stock. §10201 funding has supported important research to identify why the pathogen persists in nurseries and effective measures to prevent its spread.

America's forests provide a myriad of products and services important to our rural and urban communities, including wood products for construction or paper, neighborhood amenities, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, spiritual inspiration – and the jobs associated with these values. The U.S. lumber and paper industries employ 1.3 million people. Maintaining the §10201 program will help to protect those values, as well.

Finally, in a July 28 Senate Agriculture Committee hearing on the specialty crop provisions of the 2008 Farm Bill, Chairwoman Stabenow and others inquired as to the effectiveness of existing

“safety net” programs in terms of helping producers manage invasive plant pest and disease risks. Existing programs do not now address the plight of specialty crop producers whose premises are invaded by an introduced quarantine plant pest; producers must absorb the full losses that arise from mandated destruction of inventory, lost marketability, etc. Improved programs (modified or new) could present powerful incentives for proactive pest prevention, detection, and reporting with improved safety nets such as indemnification for unavoidable losses. We suggest that the Committee begin exploring what types of programs could be established or modified to achieve these goals. We suggest that the Committee might also explore additional steps to strengthen protection of American agricultural and forest resources from introduced pests.

Thank you for considering our views. We would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

Yours,

Sally Anderson, President, Virginia Native Plant Society

Robert L. Bendick, Director, Government Relations, The Nature Conservancy

Michael E. Cooper, President, National Plant Board

Jay Farrell, Executive Director, National Association of State Foresters

Marcia Galvin, Executive Director, Massachusetts Association of Campground Directors

Michael T. Goergen, Jr., Executive Vice President and CEO, Society of American Foresters

Rick Hawley, Executive Director, Greenspace-the Cambria Land Trust

Rian Hooff, Chair, Oregon Invasive Species Council

Dr. George Hudler, Northeast Regional Director, National Plant Diagnostic Network

Jerri J. LaHaie, Executive Director, Society of Municipal Arborists

Rick Marsh, President, North American Maple Syrup Council

Joseph J. McCarthy, Senior City Forester, City of Chicago Bureau of Forestry

Anand B. Persad, Regional Technical Advisor, The Davey Institute

Ken Rauscher, Michigan Department of Agriculture, retired

Ramsay Ravenel, Executive Director, Grantham Foundation for the Protection of the Environment

Paul Redman, President, Board of Directors, American Public Gardens Association

Craig J. Regelbrugge, Vice President, Government Relations, American Nursery & Landscape Association

Lin Schmale, Senior Director - Government Relations, Society of American Florists

Steve Woodmansee, President, Florida Native Plant Society