

Alliance for Community Trees
American Forest & Paper Association
American Nursery & Landscape Association
California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers
California Center for Urban Horticulture, UC Davis
The Davey Institute
Greenspace - the Cambria Land Trust
Iowa State University
National Association of State Foresters
National Plant Board
The Nature Conservancy
Nursery Growers Association
Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Purdue University, Department of Entomology
Society of American Florists
University of Georgia, Center for Invasive Species & Ecosystem Health
Washington Invasive Species Coalition
Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

Wednesday, October 21, 2009

Regulatory Analysis and Development
PPD, APHIS, USDA, Station 3A-03.8
4700 River Rd., Unit 118
Riverdale, MD 20737-1238

RE: Docket No. APHIS-2006-0011

Dear Sir or Madam:

The Continental Dialogue on Non-Native Forest Insects and Diseases was formed to cultivate and catalyze collaborative action among diverse interests to abate the threat to North American forests from non-native insects and diseases. The Dialogue is comprised of non-profit organizations, for-profit corporations, government agencies, landowners, and academic scholars who share an interest in forest health protection. Dialogue efforts are organized around improving programs to prevent non-native insects and diseases from arriving, surviving and thriving on the continent.

A primary focus of the Dialogue is on improving the management of pathways for invasive forest pest introduction and spread. Such pathways include the international movement of live plants for agricultural, horticultural and other purposes; the international and domestic movement of wood packaging; and long-distance transport of firewood. The ongoing effort by USDA-APHIS to overhaul the antiquated Quarantine 37 (Q-37) rules governing plant imports, and the "Not Authorized Pending Pest Risk Analysis" (NAPPRA) proposed rule specifically, are of special interest to the Dialogue.

In 2007, a Dialogue working group developed a set of consensus recommendations for needed improvements to Q-37. Those consensus recommendations are attached, and are available online at http://www.continentalforestdialogue.org/participants/workgroups/prevention/documents/Q-37_Memo-10-03-07.pdf.

In the consensus recommendations, the proposed NAPPRA category was recognized as providing important flexibility enabling APHIS to act to prevent pest introductions when either scientific information suggests that certain plant taxa from a particular origin pose a pest risk but APHIS has not yet completed a pest risk assessment or conditions under which imported plants are produced have changed in ways that pose a higher pest risk. Such situations may include:

- plants are being imported from new sources;
- plants are being produced using unexpected horticultural methods that may pose additional risk (such as, being collected from the wild rather than grown in a confined area); and
- new pests are discovered in a production area.

While we expect that many individual Dialogue participants will file specific comments and suggestions independently, the undersigned Dialogue participants wish to express their general support for the NAPPRA proposed rule. Implemented in a timely and balanced way, we believe creation of the NAPPRA category will allow APHIS to be more responsive to emerging and changing threats associated with international movement of live plants. While the NAPPRA proposed rule does not fully address all of the Dialogue's consensus recommendations, it would address many of them, wholly or at least in part.

The undersigned Dialogue participants respectfully urge APHIS to proceed toward finalizing the NAPPRA rule, and to continue the effort to modernize Q-37 as a critical component of the U.S. plant resources safeguarding system. We further look forward to robust future collaboration on this and related initiatives that will advance the Dialogue's vision.

Sincerely,

Robert Bendick, Director, US Government Relations, The Nature Conservancy

Charles Bier, Senior Director, Conservation Science, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

Robert J. Dolezal, Executive Vice President, California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers

Dr. G. Keith Douce, Co-Director & Professor, Center for Invasive Species & Ecosystem Health, The University of Georgia

Donald A. Eggen, Ph.D., Forest Health Manager, Bureau of Forestry, Division of Forest Pest Management, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Jay Farrell, Executive Director, National Association of State Foresters

Dave Fujino, Executive Director, California Center for Urban Horticulture, UC Davis

Liz Gallagher, President, Nursery Growers Association

Tom Harrington, Professor of Plant Pathology, Iowa State University

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

Chip Murray, Deputy General Counsel, American Forest & Paper Association

Bríd Nowlan, Director, Washington Invasive Species Coalition

Anand B. Persad, Ph.D., B.C.E., Regional Technical Advisor, The Davey Institute

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

Cliff Sadof, Professor, Department of Entomology, Purdue University

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

Carl Schulze, President, National Plant Board

Alice Ewen Walker, Executive Director, Alliance for Community Trees