

Continental Dialogue on Non-Native Forest Insects & Diseases

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Collaborative Action to Abate Forest Threats



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The impacts of non-native insects and diseases on America's forests have been profound, and the rates of introduction and establishment of new invaders have increased dramatically in recent years. The increase in introductions stems from a failure to address changes in trade, particularly the overall increase in trade volume, rapid movement of cargo between continents, as well as the diversity of goods traded and ports of origin. Because these issues are societal and not biological in nature, we believe that realistic solutions exist.

Even old-growth ash cannot resist the mass attacks of the non-native emerald ash borer. Some 20 million ash trees have died in the last five years.

The Continental Dialogue on Non-Native Forest Insects and Diseases brings together diverse groups to develop collaborative efforts to reduce the threat to North American forests from non-native insects and diseases. Participants include representatives of non-profit organizations, for-profit corporations, government agencies, landowners, and academic scholars. By working together we seek to achieve the following goals by 2015:

- improve federal, state and provincial programs to eliminate new introductions of non-native forest insects and diseases to North America
- improve the effectiveness of detection and eradication systems in order to prevent the survival of newly introduced invaders
- significantly reduce the ability of established populations of non-native insects and diseases to thrive and spread
- increase engagement by all key constituencies affected by or that play a role in the arrival and establishment of non-native forest insects and diseases

Imported pathogens and insects threaten iconic places, such as Mt. Tamalpais near San Francisco, heavily impacted by sudden oak death.

Forests at Risk

Invasive insects and plant diseases are taking a disastrous toll on U.S. forests. From the spread of sudden oak death through California's woodlands, to the fungus steadily killing eastern dogwoods, to the standing ghosts of dead Fraser fir on mountain peaks in North Carolina left behind by balsam woolly adelgid, our nation's trees are under attack. These infestations not only severely damage forests but also threaten to cost private landowners, state governments, municipalities and a range of timber- and horticulture-related businesses billions of dollars.



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An Asian longhorn beetle pupa deep within a doomed tree.

Once pests are established, their eradication is, at a minimum, costly and politically difficult. Often it is simply impossible. Thus a major part of the Dialogue's efforts is focused on reducing rates of introductions via the most critical pathways by which new pests reach our shores.



The American chestnut, once among the nation's largest, loveliest, and most valuable trees, persists only as small sprouts due to the non-native chestnut blight.

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Healthy Forests, Healthy People

Urban and rural forests cover one-fourth of North America, sustaining biological diversity and providing clean air and water to hundreds of millions of people. Forest products and related industries employ more than 1.6 million people and contribute \$231.5 billion to our nation's economy. Forests also provide enjoyment to millions of hikers, campers, hunters, anglers and other recreational users, which generates tens of billions of dollars more economic activity.

Perhaps most importantly, our forests—urban, suburban, rural, and wild—are part of the core foundation of our national heritage, providing beauty and shade to our homes, and are integral to the American spirit. The well-being of our forests is inextricably bound to the well-being of our citizens.

In spite of their vast importance, our forests are needlessly being lost to non-native forest insects and diseases introduced as an unwanted and unintended byproduct of international trade and travel. These invaders represent one of the greatest threats to our forests and shade trees. If we fail to counter these threats, the American landscape will change drastically and, probably, irreversibly.

Enabling Discussion, Coordinating Action

The Continental Dialogue provides a common ground for a variety of stakeholders to creatively discuss opportunities, challenges and solutions, and to agree on collective action. Acting as a central forum for discussion and consensus-building, the Dialogue provides policy input to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and state agencies, and helps participants coordinate input to Congress on issues of mutual concern regarding forest insects and pathogens.

Members of the Dialogue aim to create real and lasting change by concentrating on those areas where we have unique leverage, credibility, and opportunities. To prevent non-native insects and diseases from arriving, surviving and thriving on the continent, we organize our efforts around six topics:

- preventing the introduction of new pests and diseases,
- limiting the spread of pests and diseases in the United States,
- engaging private groups in forest protection,
- supporting the authorization of new federal action,
- encouraging increased federal funding, and
- communicating key ideas about protecting forests.

A Future of Healthy Forests

The members of the Continental Dialogue are working together to abate the threats of non-native insects and diseases. We envision a future in which healthy forests will sustain and enrich biological diversity; provide continued clean air and clean water, contribute to a stable climate; and supply other ecosystem services in abundance.

Through public awareness, strong national policies and supportive actions by all stakeholders our forests can provide new and substantial economic, recreational, and inspirational benefits for all citizens.



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America's forests are a treasured resource, like these at Muir Woods National Monument.

For more information:

<http://www.continentalforestdialogue.org>