



EASTERN PLANT BOARD

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May 11, 2009

Rebecca Bech, Deputy Administrator
USDA, APHIS, PPQ
Washington DC

Dear Rebecca,

At the recent Eastern Plant Board meeting in Portland, Maine, we continued the discussion on firewood as a pathway for the spread of invasive pests and plant diseases.

The Eastern Plant Board requests that USDA APHIS PPQ promptly establish a Firewood Committee collaboratively with the US Forest Service, the National Plant Board (NPB), the National Association of State Foresters, the Nature Conservancy (TNC) and other key partners to coordinate the following, and identify other activities that focus on limiting the spread of insect pests and plant diseases through the commercial movement of firewood.

It is our understanding that a Pest Risk Assessment for firewood is currently being prepared by APHIS PPQ's Center for Plant Health Science and Technology. The lack of a published Pest Risk Assessment for Firewood is a major stumbling block for states considering regulatory solutions to address this pathway. The Eastern Plant Board requests that PPQ complete and release the Pest Risk Assessment for Firewood in a timely manner.

It is also our understanding that PPQ is developing a set of Best Management Practices for addressing the spread of insect pests and plant diseases via infested or contaminated firewood. The Eastern Plant Board requests that PPQ complete and release the BMP's for Firewood, which could then be addressed and promoted by the Firewood Committee.

The NPB will partner with TNC to identify and compile states' existing firewood regulations, policies and current outreach activities, with the goal of posting the states' firewood regulations and policies on the NPB website. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Gary W. Gibson, President
Eastern Plant Board

cc: Paula Henstridge
Paul Chaloux