



EASTERN PLANT BOARD

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Dear Commissioners or Secretaries of Agriculture:

The Eastern Plant Board (EPB) annual meeting will be held April 6-9, 2009 in Portland, Maine. We are really looking forward to having all the states represented at the meeting. Participation in the annual meeting not only attracts colleagues from other states, but from federal agencies, in particular USDA, and NAFTA trading partners. These meetings provide a forum to discuss issues of concern and have a voice for the EPB states at the federal level. I realize that these are very tough economic times, but attending the EPB meeting is great value given the benefits that states enjoy by participating.

The meeting allows for important networking opportunities with colleagues to share experiences and learn from each other. Sometimes this results in sharing of resources which has occurred related to the outbreaks of Asian longhorned beetle in NY and MA and emerald ash borer in MD. States can work together as a region to get issues elevated to the national level, providing a greater collective voice. The EPB was able to increase the awareness of the threat of hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA). Through the EPB work via the National Plant Board, the US Forest Service established a HWA management plan focusing on all regions of the country.

At these meetings member states collaborate to bring uniformity to state plant pest regulations. The Japanese Beetle Harmonization Plan, adopted in 1998 and last updated in 2004, is an example of a coordinated program that provides consistency in states' regulation of a plant pest that is no longer domestically regulated by USDA. The 2009 meeting will provide opportunities to discuss the approaches for dealing with Asian longhorned beetle now in Massachusetts, threatening the hardwood resources in New England and states to the south, and the new pest detection provisions in the Farm Bill to provide more resources to the states to deal with plant regulatory issues.

In the face of today's resource challenges, the information and contacts gained from this meeting are even more important in helping your state plant regulatory official to conduct your state's plant regulatory program in a highly effective manner. I strongly urge you to support sending your staff to attend this valuable meeting. Thank you for your support in this effort and should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

E. Ann Gibbs
EPB President

Member States

Connecticut • Delaware • Maine • Maryland • Massachusetts • New Hampshire
New Jersey • New York • Pennsylvania • Rhode Island • Vermont • West Virginia