

**NATIONAL PLANT BOARD COUNCIL/PLANT PROTECTION AND  
QUARANTINE MANAGEMENT TEAM MARCH MEETING HIGHLIGHTS**  
March 7-9, 2000

**Imported Fire Ant.** No funding has been requested by APHIS/PPQ in the FY 2001 budget for this program. Hearings around the Country are scheduled, one being in Southern California. The NPB Council conducted a planning session for the NPB's hearing presentation. It was agreed that the NPB will push for a FY 2002 PPQ baseline budget augmentation of \$7.5 million accompanied by budget control language prohibiting redirection of the funds to any other program. The key budget line items and dollar amounts in the NPB funding proposal are as follows:

-Administration, supervision, quality control and coordination:	\$ 900,000
-Treatment methods and development	\$ 100,000
-Biocontrol agents exploration, quarantine clearance, rearing, etc.:	\$1,000,000
-Survey in states not fully infested	\$3,000,000
-Quarantine enforcement by states	\$2,500,000

The argument will be made that the federal program is broken. The exact distribution of the pest is not known because survey has been inadequate. Enforcement of the quarantine is poor because there is no PPQ coordination, supervision or quality control. Controls are only being applied in nurseries.

The program began to flounder with the loss of effective chemical treatments. Direction of the program became unclear and funding for the program began a steady decline from \$1.3 million in FY 1990 to nothing in FY 2001. As a result, spread of the pest both naturally and artificially increased. The infested area grew and imported fire and populations increased leading to an exponential increase in the potential for additional natural and artificial spread. The major and satellite infestations in California are the result of this increasing spread potential. California's cost figures will be cited to demonstrate the seriousness of the problem.

Dropping the federal quarantine is unacceptable. The states could promulgate their own quarantines but this could result in a hodge-podge of regulations. Furthermore, while California is conducting an eradication program including quarantine, delimitation survey and treatments, there would be no ongoing survey, no methods development and no control of populations in other infested areas.

There are new hormonal chemicals available for imported fire ant control. More importantly, biological control efforts to date show good potential for development of environmentally acceptable controls that will target only the imported fire ant. Emphasis on the discovery and rearing of effective biological control agents that can be used in an integrated pest management program will pay huge dividends in the future. Reduced fire populations mean reduced natural and artificial spread potential.

In the meantime, USDA supervision, coordination, quality control, and methods development must be strengthened; and federal funding must be made available for greatly enhanced state survey and quarantine enforcement. To ensure that not less than \$6.5 million reaches field level operations, a \$7.5 million baseline augmentation of the PPQ budget is required for FY 2002. This augmentation must be made without redirecting funds from other PPQ programs. Budget control language should be included with the augmentation to ensure that not less than \$6.5 million is available for biological control development, survey and quarantine enforcement.

**NPBC Regulated Non-Quarantine/Official Control Concept Paper.** This paper was reviewed with Nancy Klag. Based on the discussion with Nancy, Central Plant Board discussions, and NPBC deliberations the draft document has been revised. President Balaam will distribute it to NPB members. Further discussions will be held at the Eastern, Southern and Western Plant Board meetings. Scott Pfister will lead the discussion at the Eastern Plant Board meeting. Nancy Klag will engage the PPQ staff in discussions as well.

**NPB Strategic Planning and NASDA Communications MOU.** President Balaam suggested that the NPB put more emphasis on the development of policies and less on the development and distribution of resolutions. Work is needed on state harmonization and conformance with policies, guidelines, etc. Organizational alignment with PPQ and regional plant boards is another area for emphasis.

Patrick Atagi participated with the NPBC in discussions of the draft NASDA Communications Memorandum of Understanding. As a result the document has been revised. Copies will be distributed to the Council members in preparation for further discussion at the April meeting. Patrick Atagi will deliver it to Gus Douglas of NASDA's Animal and Plant Health Committee. Hopefully, the document can be approved by the NPB membership at the 2000 Annual Meeting in Delaware. Patrick also requested NPB input into NASDA's policy development and farm bill recommendations.

**Model Plant Pest Law.** The Council also discussed the Model Plant Pest Law that was developed by a NPB committee chaired by Don Eggen. Don and his committee members were commended for all their hard work. Suggestions were made for revision leading to a discussion at the NPB Annual Meeting in August.

**Safeguarding Report.** The SAPR is considered as the blueprint for the future of PPQ. The agency still is focused on its implementation. Recommendations from the SAPR implementation committees will be married with staff program initiatives to create PPQ's FY 2002 budget proposal.

**Center for Plant Health, Science and Technology.** PPQ is in the process of selecting a Director for the Center. A final decision should be made within the next two months. The five National Science Program Leaders also are being selected. Interviews were being performed for one during the week. The strategy for the CPHST is "turnkey": sniff out, adapt, and adopt.

**FY 2001 Budget Hearings.** Dr. Reed and Dr. Dunkle will participate in FY 2001 budget hearings next week. Staff and NPB Council have been asked for creative options for FY 2002. Process type proposals do not pique congressional interest, program proposals focused on problem solving do.

**Plant Protection Act.** Compromise language has been developed to address issues raised during the last session. APHIS' decision on Argentine citrus threatens a compromise. In addition, Senator Akaka has indicated that the compromise language does not address all of his concerns.

**Citrus Canker.** Additional funding in the range of \$150 million to \$180 million will be provided in the supplemental budget. This is in response to determinations made in recent weeks by the Citrus Canker Task Force, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and APHIS managers. It is estimated that the program will require \$175 million just for field operations. As many as 2000 people will be employed in the field. The plan includes an exhaustive survey based on inspection of grapefruit as a sentinel host. The objective is to find new infestations early. A major public awareness and outreach program is planned to complement the survey component.

Some believe that the program is about to hit the point of massive public resistance because all citrus will be eliminated from 80,000 residential properties. Some residents believe this is a plot by the citrus industry to force them to buy all their citrus rather than pick it from their own trees. Homeowners will be given a \$100 voucher for tree replacement with a non-citrus canker host. The cost of this voucher program is estimated at \$68 million.

Recent citrus canker discoveries in Homestead area lime orchards is likely to result in elimination of virtually the entire U. S. lime industry by the fall when there possibly will be no more lime trees in south Florida.

**Plum Pox.** Federal and state destruction orders were issued on March 6 for tree removal. No orders have been issued yet for destruction of approximately 6000 nursery trees in Tennessee and Pennsylvania. The quarantine calls for a host-free period.

National survey is a major concern by the states. To date, the USDA has not finalized its survey protocols for sample collection and laboratory diagnostics. However, all planning is completed in California. Survey efforts have also begun. The USDA has developed and printed 49,000 copies of a new plum pox brochure (copy attached). State Plant Health Directors will be the contact persons for those who would like to obtain a supply of the brochure.

**Asian Long-Horned Beetle.** Mike Stefan is the new national program coordinator. Each of the project areas in Illinois and New York will continue to have separate leaders.

**Pest Detection.** Bob Spaide reported that Coanne O'herm is the acting coordinator. Bob has had difficulty recruiting and selecting suitable candidates for the job. Consistent with

the SAPR, Bob and staff will be working to establish program priorities. Pathway analyses will be employed following an analysis of international trends in trade such as the growth in trade with China and Brazil where significant pest problems exist. Research of new detection methods also will be a factor. Deputy Administrator Ric Dunkle suggested that there should be a national survey to determine what pests already exist in the Country. To achieve this, we would need to improve the infrastructure, optimize existing survey efforts and harness the detection potential that exists among the stakeholders. The strategy would be national leadership with local flexibility.

**Noxious Weeds.** Al Tasker is the program leader. There will be a focus on “pulling together” partnerships to prevent the introduction and spread of noxious weeds. One program emphasis will be to stop the sale of noxious weeds by nurseries. Herbarium finds will be investigated to validate them. The availability of pesticides will be evaluated. Use of the “advance notice of proposed rulemaking” is proposed to develop a federal rule that contains criteria for noxious weed listings.

**Fruit Fly Safeguarding.** Mike Stefan reported that the U. S. EPA is about to announce that it is changing the classification of Malathion to “likely carcinogen”. This will adversely affect fruit fly eradication and require more emphasis on Spinosad<sup>R</sup>.

Mike also discussed the USDA’s proposed initiatives. The first was for expansion of the Waimanalo facility. PPQ would partner with ARS to work on mass rearing of *Bactrocera* spp. The second initiative is improvement of quality control for detection trapping programs in the states. The third is eradication of the Mexican fruit fly in the Rio Grande Valley. SIT resistance and relocation of the Mission Mexican Fruit Fly rearing facility were concerns. Bill Callison pointed out that the proposed pest free area along the border with Mexico would be a key component. This proposal was first made by Dr. Luis Aguirre, Director General of Plant Health in Mexico. The Border Governors Agribusiness Committee has since taken it up. A specific proposal is on the table for fruit flies but a number of other pests including Karnal bunt have been identified.

**Invasive Species.** Pam Byrne outlined PPQ’s initiatives for invasive species. The total cost of the FY 2002 initiatives is projected at \$8.8 million. Initially \$29 million had been requested but that amount was cut back by the Agency. User fees might cover some of the activities proposed. The NPBC suggested that such activities be removed from the invasive species initiatives proposal and be included under user fees initiatives. All remaining invasive species initiatives would be advanced as a package for funding as a separate PPQ line item.

The PPQ invasive species strategy will be to link with other public agencies, increase the use of grants or cooperative agreements to accomplish essential work, enhance early detection, and closer work relationships with states to prevent introduction and effect control and eradication programs. The initiatives were all presented in a handout. Significantly, \$1.45 million is included for improved diagnostics. An extensive invasive species outreach effort also is proposed.