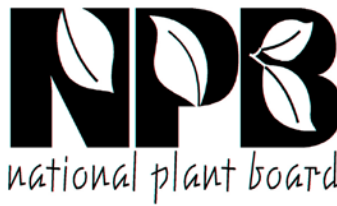


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October 1, 2016

Dr. Monica Lear, Director  
Forest Health Protection  
USDA Forest Service  
201 14th St, SW, FHP 3CE  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Dr. Lear:

The National Plant Board recognizes the significant threat that the gypsy moth poses to America's hardwood forests. The members of the National Plant Board greatly appreciate the work of the Slow-The-Spread (STS) program and recognize that our vast oak/hickory forests have directly benefited from its success. The STS program has a long history of successfully limiting the movement of the gypsy moth's leading edge towards the west and south. Spread has been limited by more than 70% from 13 miles a year (without STS) to 3 miles per year (with STS). The STS program has demonstrated a benefit to cost ratio of 3 to 1, and is one of the most successful plant pest management programs in our nation's history. Even though over 75 million acres of forest land has been defoliated by the gypsy moth since 1970, nearly 70% of the susceptible hardwood forests in the United States have not yet been infested by the gypsy moth and are still at great risk. Furthermore, it has the potential to impact nearly every state in the nation. Moreover, its primary host, *Quercus* spp., is one of the most economically important tree genera to our nation's forest products industry in terms of both domestic markets and international exports.

The STS program in previous years received as much as \$11 million in funding from the U.S. Forest Service. In recent years the funding had leveled out to about \$8 million annually but in 2016 it was reduced further to about \$7.5 million. If funding is not maintained at a minimum of \$8 million per year, the resulting accelerated advancement of the gypsy moth leading edge will cause significant economic and environmental impacts to our nation's forest resources. Impacts go far beyond the economic, however. Many other impacts have been cited including, but not limited to: environmental losses (harm to water quality due to increased soil erosion, shifts in biodiversity, loss of an important mast species for wildlife, reducing ecosystem function through habitat loss, changing food web dynamics, ground vegetation changes, ground level moisture may be lower and temperatures higher with reduced litter layer), human health impacts, and additional economic losses due to affected tourism industries and impacts to nursery and forest products industries from expanded quarantines.

The members of the National Plant Board strongly urge the U.S. Forest Service to maintain its level of funding to the Gypsy Moth STS Program at a minimum of \$8 million annually, and to consider the program as one of its highest, long-term priorities.

Sincerely,

Joe Collins, President  
National Plant Board

CC:

Barb Glenn, Executive Director, NASDA

Osama El-Lissy, Deputy Administrator, USDA APHIS PPQ

Paula Henstridge, Assistant Deputy Administrator, USDA APHIS PPQ

Bill Toomey, Director of Forest Health, North America Region, The Nature Conservancy

Christopher Martin, Chair, National Association of State Foresters Forest Science and Health Committee

Donald Duerr, USDA Forest Service

Robert Rabaglia, USDA Forest Service

Noel Schneeberger, USDA Forest Service

Donna Leonard, USDA Forest Service

Carl Harper, National Gypsy Moth Management Board Chair

Larry Nichols, Southern Plant Board President, Gypsy Moth Slow The Spread

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