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October 29, 2009

Ms. Rebecca Bech
Deputy Administrator for Plant Protection and Quarantine
USDA, APHIS, PPQ
Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building
14th Street and Independence Avenue, SW
Room 301-E
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Rebecca:

The purpose of this letter is to request your support and assistance in partnering with states and forestry and conservation organizations to develop a comprehensive national firewood policy by the end of this calendar year. While the components of such a plan are certainly complex and multi-faceted, the National Plant Board recommends that strong consideration be given to including, among others, the contributions that voluntary initiatives, regulatory, and outreach will contribute to such a plan.

Numerous invasive species are known to be spread through movement of firewood and have exposed our state and national forests to the establishment of such serious plant pests as the gypsy moth, emerald ash borer, Asian longhorned beetle, and sudden oak death. These new pest introductions directly threaten the immediate and long-term health of our nation's forests. From a broad perspective, the cumulative effects from such introductions, while not fully known, are expected to be extensive and far-reaching. Thus far, responses to handling firewood have been fragmented with individual states moving forward with independent regulatory or educational efforts. Clearly needed is a comprehensive national approach to this issue.

Ms. Rebecca Bech
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The National Plant Board membership fully supports the development of such a comprehensive national policy and pledges its assistance in jointly working with USDA, APHIS, PPQ to accomplish this task. Our membership stands ready to assist with actively moving forward on this initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carl P. Schulze". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "S" at the end.

Carl Schulze
NPB President

cc: Secretary Tom Vilsack
Deputy Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs
Cindy Smith, Administrator, USDA, APHIS
Jay Ferrell, Executive Director, National Association of State Foresters
Vic Harabin, Eastern Regional Director, USDA, APHIS, PPQ
Phil Garcia, Western Regional Director, USDA, APHIS, PPQ
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