



EASTERN PLANT BOARD

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April 8, 2008

The Honorable Jon S. Corzine
Office of the Governor
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Corzine,

The Eastern Plant Board represents the state plant regulatory officials throughout the Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic states. Our member states work collaboratively to safeguard the agriculture, horticulture and forest resources in our region.

As plant regulatory officials in the states surrounding New Jersey, and from states that receive plants and plant products produced in New Jersey, we are very troubled to learn of the proposal to eliminate the New Jersey Department of Agriculture and transfer its functions to other state agencies.

We recognize that most states are facing budget constraints, and we all are struggling with similar difficulties.

A press release from your Office dated April 1, 2008, states that the critical functions of the department will remain, and that no initiative currently being undertaken by the department will be left out, pointing to Rhode Island as an example. Rhode Island is a member state of the Eastern Plant Board. We have observed firsthand the diminished support for these functions in Rhode Island relative to other states. Plant pest programs and plant regulatory programs appear to lack the same level of priority and support in states where they are housed in agencies other than Departments of Agriculture.

This proposal is of special concern to our member states, as the New Jersey Department of Agriculture has made great strides to date in eradicating the Asian longhorned beetle, whose presence threatens our forests, forest industries, tourism and shade trees. It is vital to the states in our region that support for this effort not be lessened.

In addition, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Phillip Alampi Beneficial Insect Laboratory is a tremendous resource supplying many of the states in the Northeast with predatory and parasitic insect species to help control invasive insect and weeds in the region.

Member States

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

Again, The Eastern Plant Board hopes these comments are helpful to you and other New Jersey officials as you work to provide essential services to New Jersey's citizens and protect the state's agricultural and natural resources and related industries and its many constituents for future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann Gibbs". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A".

Ann Gibbs
Eastern Plant Board President
Maine Department of Agriculture

cc: Douglas H. Fisher, Chairman, Agriculture Committee
Nelson T. Albano, Vice Chairman, Agriculture Committee
Richard J. Codey, Senate President
Stephen M. Sweeney, Senate Majority Leader
Thomas H. Kean, Jr., Senate Minority Leader
Joseph J. Roberts, Jr., Assembly Speaker
Bonnie Watson Coleman, Assembly Majority Leader
Alex DeCroce, Assembly Minority Leader
Richard Nieuwenhuis, President, NJ Farm Bureau