



EASTERN PLANT BOARD

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May 11, 2009

Rebecca Bech, Deputy Administrator
USDA, APHIS, PPQ
Washington DC

Dear Rebecca,

I am writing this letter after discussions at the recent Eastern Plant Board (EPB) annual meeting regarding the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) infestation in Worcester, MA that was detected in August 2008. Surrounding states are becoming concerned as the infestation appears to be more widespread than first anticipated. ALB has been found in the US in various locations since 1996, but this is the first time it is located adjacent to a large tract of hardwood forest. Managing this infestation requires the ongoing removal of over 18,000 trees that require chipping and subsequently disposal of large volumes of wood chips.

One of the concerns raised during the meeting was the level of quality assurance regarding the size and loading of the wood chips. The wood chips need to meet a standard size of 1" by 1" in 2 dimensions. There have been reports that in fact the chips are larger than this and also that larger wood being rejected during the grinding process is being loaded onto trucks and shipped. Most of the wood chips are being shipped north to ME, VT and NH to be used as fuel in cogeneration facilities. The EPB is requesting that APHIS PPQ set up a system to insure that loads of chips meet the standard size and yard sanitation protocols are in place to eliminate oversized wood in the loads.

The other request is that USDA APHIS PPQ convene a science panel to review the progress of the ALB program in Worcester and make recommendations regarding how to proceed in the future. USDA APHIS PPQ has a long history dealing with ALB in urban environments, but the MA situation is different. This infestation is abutting on some of the most prime hardwood forested areas in the east. These forests are important for wood production, wildlife habitat, maple syrup production and fall foliage. There is a lot of concern in this region regarding the potential impact ALB could have on these resources. Bringing together experts would go a long way to providing ongoing support in managing this infestation.

Thanks for your consideration regarding these matters. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,



Gary W. Gibson, President
Eastern Plant Board

cc: Vic Harabin, PPQ ER Director
Paula Henstridge, Assistant to the Deputy Director
Christine Markham, ALB National Program Director
Julie Twardowski, PPQ Officer, ALB
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