

THE CENTRAL PLANT BOARD

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June 15, 2015

Osama El-Lissy,
Deputy Administrator
USDA-APHIS-PPQ
Washington DC

Dear Osama:

The Central Plant Board sincerely appreciates our partnership with USDA APHIS PPQ and the role you play in safeguarding agriculture in our states. We believe that the benefits of this cooperative approach to plant protection depend significantly on the strength of our relationships with the State Plant Health Directors (SPHDs) and the time, staff and resources they have to commit in each of our states.

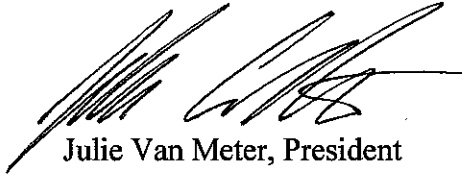
The State Plant Health Directors have been key partners in each of our states, especially in times of crisis such as detections of pests of national significance (emerald ash borer, Asian longhorned beetle, plum pox virus, *Ralstonia solanacearum* race 3 biovar 2 and many others). They also play a key role in our daily work such as managing cooperative agreements, carrying out pest surveys, fulfilling export needs for our industries, overseeing permit issues and MOUs, participating in pest risk committees, and providing guidance on all issues relating to USDA APHIS PPQ. In short, they are the physical representation of USDA APHIS PPQ in each of the states.

Since the SPHDs fulfill such a critical role in agriculture in each of the states, the members of the Central Plant Board respectfully ask that every effort be made to provide a SPHD for each state. When it is determined that splitting a SPHD across multiple states is the only option, we ask that USDA provide substantive, clear communication with the affected states on how the decision was made, and what changes in expectations and staffing will result from the shared position. The unfortunate reality is that one person cannot do the work formerly done by two. States that have shared SPHDs frequently express concerns due to having experienced a reduced level of service, lapses in communication, and lack of a USDA APHIS PPQ presence at the state level. It is imperative for the success of this cooperative partnership that USDA clearly state the

expectations and duties of a SPHD with multiple states, so that all involved parties have the same understanding of duties and responsibilities. Furthermore, we ask that a clear plan be developed to provide coverage for SPHD duties during times of transition, and that there be early and constant communication with State Plant Regulatory Officials (SPROs) during those times. Finally, we ask, in addition to developing clear expectations for the SPHD positions, that training of new SPHDs be made a high priority, including orientation for TDY SPHDs when temporarily assigned to a new state.

The Central Plant Board sincerely appreciates the excellent relationship many of us have with the SPHDs in our states, and we rely on them tremendously in the performance of our own safeguarding duties. We are committed to continuing that relationship to the benefit of our state's agricultural interests. If you would like to discuss this issue further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie Van Meter', is written over a horizontal line.

Julie Van Meter, President
Central Plant Board

CC:

Rebecca Bech, Associate Deputy Administrator, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
Mike Watson, Associate Deputy Administrator, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
Paula Henstridge, Assistant Deputy Administrator, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
Geir Friisoe, President, National Plant Board
Dana Rhodes, President, Eastern Plant Board
Mike Evans, President, Southern Plant Board
Brad White, President, Western Plant Board