



Southern Plant Board

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North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
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Raleigh, NC 27699-1060

May 5, 2008

Ms. Abigail Kimball
Chief
USDA Forest Service
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-0003

Dear Ms. Kimball:

On behalf of the Southern Plant Board membership, I am writing to express our membership's support for full funding for implementation of the Gypsy Moth Slow the Spread (GM STS) Program. To fully implement the GM STS Program, it is expected to require at least \$10 million in FY 2009, along with additional \$6 million in funding above FY 2008 levels for implementation of gypsy moth suppression and eradication activities. This funding is necessary to reduce the damage being caused by the current outbreaks and to eliminate isolated infestations of the gypsy moth.

The GM STS program is a collaborative effort uniting ten states, the USDA Forest Service (FS) and USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) in a highly effective pest management strategy. Since its formation in 2000, the GM STS program has significantly reduced the spread and impact of gypsy moth, which is one of the single most destructive forest pests ever introduced into the United States. Working cooperatively with the Forest Service, the states of Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin, a model approach to managing and slowing the advance of gypsy moth in a band covering nearly 51 million acres has been developed. Data overwhelmingly supports that the GM STS program work has slowed the spread of gypsy moth by 70% and prevented the impacts that would have occurred on more than 75 million newly infested acres. The GM STS initiative has achieved unprecedented success in its unique partnership of multiple states working with two Federal agencies to form a foundation that makes management decisions based on biological need rather than matching state funds. The continued success is highly dependent on consistent funding.

In order for states to continue to work effectively and cooperatively with FS and APHIS in managing gypsy moth to protect natural and urban forests, funding from FS and APHIS should, at a minimum, be maintained at the historic level of \$10 million. Any reduction in GM STS funding by FS has the potential to significantly accelerate the spread and destruction of gypsy moth into states that have prime habitat and environment for this insect such that these states

Member States

Alabama – Arkansas – Florida – Georgia – Kentucky – Louisiana – Mississippi
North Carolina – Oklahoma – Puerto Rico – South Carolina – Tennessee – Texas – Virginia

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would likely suffer devastating losses. Finally, additional funding of \$6 million above the FY 2008 level will be required for successful responses in the suppression and eradication areas.

The Southern Plant Board sincerely appreciates your consideration of this request and looks forward to cooperatively working with your agency in responding to this continued pest threat.

Sincerely,

Gene B. Cross
President

Distribution:

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