



Animal and Plant
Health Inspection
Service

Plant Protection and
Quarantine

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Mr. Joe Collins
President, National Plant Board
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University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY 40546-0091

JAN - 7 2016

Dear Mr. Collins:

Subject: PPQ State Plant Health Directors

I am responding to your November 18 letter requesting that PPQ continue to fill vacant state plant health director (SPHD) positions to further strengthen the cooperative relationship between the states and the USDA. Thank you for taking the time to express the views of the National Plant Board (NPB) as they relate to this topic. I agree with your assessment that having a strong SPHD presence in the states throughout the country strengthens our state and federal relationship.

As you indicated, using the state plant regulatory officials in the hiring process has had positive results for everyone involved. With their assistance, PPQ has recently filled vacant SPHD positions in:

1. Illinois,
2. Kansas,
3. Louisiana,
4. Minnesota,
5. Nebraska,
6. Oregon,
7. South Carolina, and
8. Vermont-New Hampshire.

The SPHD position for Iowa remains vacant; we expect to select a candidate soon.

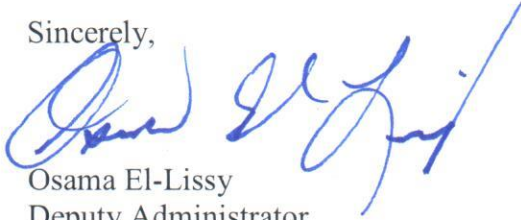
While not every state currently has its own SPHD, PPQ is committed to analyzing the needs of each state, examining the potential workload, and listening to local concerns prior to deciding to hire a SPHD on a per state or multi-state basis. The decision process is not an irreversible singular event, for situations in states change. When we filled what had been the combined North Carolina-South Carolina position, the data suggested that each of these states needed to have its own SPHD, which is the path we chose.

PPQ is committed to building and maintaining an excellent relationship with the National Plant Board on this and other topics. If we determine that any future vacancies may require a SPHD to be responsible for multiple states, then we will engage with the affected states on the decision-making process.

Mr. Joe Collins
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Thank you again for your time and commitment in fostering a successful relationship between the NPB and PPQ.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Osama El-Lissy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping line extending from the end of the name.

Osama El-Lissy
Deputy Administrator
Plant Protection and Quarantine

fo/pam