



**Invasive Species and Forest Health: Expanding
the Team Conference**

November 14–15, 2006 in Washington, DC

**USDA Conference to Mobilize Citizens in Fight
against Invasive Species**

Since the first settlers arrived with honeybees in tow for pollination and sweeteners, foreign plants, animals, pathogens, and insect species have been intentionally and accidentally introduced into the United States. By some estimates, thousands have been introduced over the centuries. While most introduced species are not invasive, some are. Even a single invasive species can cause significant harm.

“An invasive species is one that is introduced into a new ecosystem and that causes *harm* to the environment, economy, or in some cases, to human health,” said Dr. Christopher Dionigi, assistant director, domestic policy, science and cooperation at the National Invasive Species Council.

“Invasive species are transported by trade or other human actions,” he added. The human action that introduces an invasive species can be accidental or, in the instance of someone attempting bioterrorism, deliberate. The National Invasive Species Council, created by Executive Order in 1999, is charged with coordinating efforts among 13 Federal departments and agencies whose missions include combating invasive species. The goal is to protect against both accidental and intentional introductions and to reduce the impact of those invasive species that gain entrance into the United States.

The stakes are very high. “Some scientists estimate that the economic harm caused by invasive species is close to \$100 billion a year,” Dionigi explained. While it’s hard to quantify the money spent to fight invasive species, some estimates put the amount spent at the Federal level at \$1.2 billion dollars a year, according to Dionigi.

Our global economy has inadvertently fueled concern in this area. Expanded international trade has increased the opportunities for new invasive plants, animals, and pathogens to be transported to the United States, where they gain access to U.S. forests, agricultural resources, and the overall ecosystem.

“We are interacting with the rest of the world at unprecedented rates. While every unit of trade has with it an associated unit of the risk of bringing invasive species into the country, isolating the U.S.A. from international trade does not pose a viable solution to this issue,” explained Bill Dickerson, invasive species coordinator, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Plant Protection and Quarantine division.

“Instead, we have to know where all the barn doors are and close as many of them as we can to keep invasive species out of the country,” Dickerson said.

Insects like the emerald ash borer (EAB) and Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) arrived here from Asia buried deep in the wooden pallets and crates used to transport goods internationally. Once in the United States they emerged from the wooden packing materials, settled into suburban and urban trees, and completed their life cycles. Both wood-boring pests kill trees. In response to pests’ gaining entrance in this manner, new international rules specify pretreatments for solid wood packing material. The treatments kill any pests that might be contained in international shipments before they arrive at U.S. ports.

Invaders monitored, actively managed, or eradicated by the USDA and States include the ALB and EAB; the gypsy moth, brought here by an enterprising citizen in the 1800s for silk production; the imported fire ant, inadvertently introduced in the early 1900s; *Sirex noctilio*, a wood-wasp pest of stressed pines; the hemlock wooly adelgid, causing concern for hemlock trees in the East; and *Phytophthora ramorum*—a fungus from Europe that causes the disease sudden oak death.

To improve public understanding of invasive species problems and how the Government responds to them, USDA's APHIS and Forest Service (FS) are building upon their successful collaboration to jointly sponsor the "Invasive Species and Forest Health: Expanding the Team" conference on November 14 and 15, 2006. This Washington, DC, meeting is designed to share information with stakeholders about species deemed to be invasive pests and expand the team fighting them.

The conference will raise awareness about invasive species attacking our forests, build new partnerships to combat these pests, and strengthen existing partnerships between stakeholders and officials concerned with the health of U.S. forests, agriculture, and our overall ecosystem.

"Control and eradication of invading pests is the role of government at all levels. Federal, State, tribal, and local governments must engage each other and work cooperatively because invasive species cross jurisdictions—they know no political boundaries," APHIS' Dickerson said.

For more information about the "Forest Health and Invasive Species: Expanding the Team" conference, log onto <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/meetings/foresthealth>

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