

Written Public Testimony from members of the

Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition and supporters:

Alliance for Community Trees, American Forests, California ReLeaf

California Urban Forests Council, Center for Invasive Species Prevention

National Association of Conservation Districts, National Association of State Foresters

Society of American Foresters, Society of Municipal Arborists

The Davey Foundation, Tree Care Industry Association

Submitted to the House Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration

and Related Agencies

USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

April 13, 2018

The Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition comprises national organizations and corporations representing hundreds of thousands of professionals and millions of supporters who care for, monitor and support trees growing in our urban and community forests—the trees growing where most people in the United States live. We write today in support of funding for programs at the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) that help keep the nation’s forests healthy by preventing introduction and spread of invasive pests. **Specifically, we ask the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies to maintain the Fiscal Year 2018 funding levels for four line-items under the USDA APHIS Plant Health program: Tree and Wood Pests (\$56 million),**

Detection Funding (\$27 million), Methods Development (\$21 million), and Specialty Crops (\$178 million).

Because of the significant threat posed by non-native tree-killing pests to forests in both urban and rural or wildland settings, it is paramount to continue to adequately fund these programs. Pests are often initially introduced in the urban or suburban settings which first receive the bulk of the imports which are transporting the pests. Municipal governments and homeowners already pay billions of dollars each year to counter these pests; these costs will rise dramatically if the pests are allowed to spread. The pests also cause the loss of mature tree canopies in communities across the country. Research has shown it may take at least 4 generations for the community's tree canopy to be restored when lost to an invasive pest.

Although pests often first establish cities or suburbs, they don't stay there. Instead, the worst of them proliferate and spread to other vulnerable trees. This movement is also often facilitated by people—through the movement of wood (such as firewood) and plants (such as through the nursery trade). Thus, the pests introduced to our cities threaten not just the trees in city parks, along their streets, and in people's yards—as important as those trees are to the environment and human well-being. Those pests also threaten forests across the continent. While rapid eradication efforts initiated when the pests are first detected are crucial to preventing pests' spread and the resulting destruction to our forests, the best defense is to stop the entry. These efforts are the responsibility of the USDA APHIS.

Unfortunately, USDA APHIS' Tree and Wood Pests budget account currently funds containment or eradication programs targeting only three of the 30 or more tree-killing pests recently introduced to the United States: the Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB), Emerald Ash

Borer (EAB), and Gypsy Moth. A fourth pest, *Phytophthora ramorum* or sudden oak death (SOD), receives approximately \$5 million under the Specialty Crops program. Funding is insufficient for countering even these target pests. The Specialty Crops program should also support efforts to combat the recently discovered spotted lantern fly and shot hole borers (described below).

Of greater concern is APHIS' inability to expand its programs to handle the growing destruction caused by the many additional pests across the country for which the agency currently has no program. In California—where non-native pests now make up one-third of the tree-killing pests—the polyphagous and Kuroshio shot hole borers attack hundreds of tree species, including California sycamore, cottonwoods, and several oaks. These borers threaten to kill 26 million trees—more than a third of the trees growing in urban areas in southern California. In the Mid-Atlantic states, the spotted lanternfly outbreak threatens orchard crops and grapes, as well as oak, walnut, poplar, and pine trees. In Hawai'i, the 'ōhi'a trees which dominate the Islands' forests and protect vital watersheds are under attack by three non-native pathogens.

Already, local governments across the country are spending more than \$3 billion each year to remove trees on city property killed by non-native pests. Homeowners are spending \$1 billion to remove and replace trees on their properties and are absorbing an additional \$1.5 billion in reduced property values and reducing the quality of their neighborhoods. Electric utilities have also been significantly impacted by having to address the increased risk to public safety and electric service reliability resulting from these invasive pests. Research has shown people die sooner when their urban forests are killed by pests.

These costs will rise enormously if APHIS is unable due to expand its programs due to funding shortfalls. In California alone, the municipalities and homeowners will be forced to absorb an estimated \$36.2 billion to remove and replace trees killed by the shot hole borers. And, new pests are certain to exacerbate the challenge. Each year, border inspectors detect more than 800 import shipments with pests infesting the crates and pallets. These represent a small proportion of the actual risk; one analysis estimated that 20,000 shipments with infested packaging enter the country each year. APHIS must have sufficient resources to respond when the inevitable newly introduced pests are detected.

Given the rising threat, it is essential to maintain funding also for APHIS' Pest Detection program. The Detection Funding line supports a collaborative state–federal program that detects and guards against the potential effects of newly introduced pests. Successful eradication programs depend on such early detection. States will not be able to make up for this loss, which means more widespread pest damage and a loss of jobs in our rural communities and increasing loss of forestland to invasive pest species. Maintaining if not increasing, the current funding level for these programs is crucially important to the long-term health of our forests, the economic health of forest-based rural economies and health of our urban forest cover.

To counter these pests, APHIS must have effective detection and eradication tools. These tools are developed through the Methods Development program. Cuts to this budget line would seriously hobble both federal and state agencies' capacity to reduce pests' impacts.

Pests don't respect invisible borders. Absent coordinated and well-funded containment programs, they cross state lines and spread across the country, eventually finding a home in our towns, cities, National forests, and National parks. **Therefore, we ask the Congress to protect**

their constituents from further economic, health, and environmental losses by supporting APHIS' Tree and Wood Pest budget at \$56 million in FY19; Plant Pest Detection budget at \$27 million; Methods Development at \$21 million; and the Specialty Crops budget line at \$178 million.

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