

**Written Public Testimony from members of the
Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition and supporters:**

Alliance for Community Trees, American Forests, Arbor Day Foundation
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 / Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration
and Related Agencies
USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
May 12, 2017

The Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition comprises of 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 where most people in the US live. Signed-on to this testimony are a representation of that coalition and supporters. 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 2017 funding levels for the "Tree and Wood Pests" line (\$54 million) and the "Specialty Crops" line (\$166.5 million) under the USDA APHIS Plant Health program.**

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. The costs associated with these introduced pests costs billions of dollars each year, and result in the loss of mature tree canopies in communities across the country.

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 Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (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 the target pests.

To protect our forests, APHIS must have sufficient funds to expand its programs to handle the growing destruction of other pests across the country. 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 California’s Inland Empire, Coastal Southern California, and Southwest Desert. Absent an active APHIS involvement in developing effective control measures, the municipalities and homeowners of these regions will be forced to absorb an estimated \$36.2 billion in costs for removing trees as they die and replacing them to maintain the valuable urban forest canopy. In Pennsylvania, the spotted lanternfly outbreak threatens agriculture – especially grapes, apples, plums, cherries, peaches, nectarines, apricots, and almonds; as well as oak, walnut, poplar, and pine trees. Pennsylvania authorities, supported by funding from the Farm Bill § 10007 program, have so far prevented the spread of the spotted lanternfly. However, they cannot complete eradication of this pest without additional federal funding.

Currently, 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. People even die sooner when urban forests are killed by pests.

Additional challenges lie ahead because it is likely that new tree-killing pests will be introduced with rising import volumes. 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 13,000 shipments with infested packaging enter the country each year. APHIS must have sufficient resources to respond when the inevitable newly introduced pests are detected.

Pests don’t respect invisible borders, they cross state lines and inevitably find their way 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 \$54 million in FY18 and continuing to support the sudden oak death program with \$166.5 million under the Specialty Crops budget line.

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