

Written Public Testimony from members of the Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition,
provided by Faith T. Campbell, Vice President, Center for Invasive Species Prevention

signatories:

Alliance for Community Trees, American Forests, American Society of Consulting Arborists,
Center for Invasive Species Prevention, National Recreation and Parks Association, Outdoor Power
Equipment Institute, Society of Municipal Arborists, Utility Arborists Association

Submitted to the House Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration

and Related Agencies

Agency: USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

14 March, 2016

The Sustainable Urban Forests Coalition is composed of city planners, educators, managers, and many other professionals who care for, monitor and advocate for trees and our urban forests as a whole. 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 2016 funding levels for the "Tree and Wood Pests" line (\$54 million) and the "Specialty Crops" line (\$164 million) under the USDA APHIS Plant Health program.**

Our suggested funding levels are higher than those contained in the President’s budget. We suggest these higher funding levels because of the significant threat posed by non-native tree-killing pests to forests in both urban and rural or wildland settings. Pests are often initially introduced in urban or suburban settings. This is because these populated areas receive the bulk of the imports which are transporting the pests. So the pests’ first opportunity to escape and find new hosts is usually in cities or suburbs.

Once introduced to their new homes, however, the pests 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).

As a result, the pests introduced to our cities threaten not just the trees in city parks, yards, and along their streets – important as those trees are to the environment and human well-being. Those pests also threaten forests across the continent.

Experience has shown that the response and eradication efforts that include tree removal and replanting is at least 10 times greater than prevention.

USDA APHIS’ “Tree and Wood Pests” budget account provides the overwhelming preponderance of funds used to eradicate or contain tree-killing, wood-boring insects, including several already killing trees in the United States: the Asian longhorned beetle, emerald ash borer, and polyphagous shot hole borer. There is a significant risk that new tree-killing pests will be introduced as import volumes rise. An estimated 35 shipping containers out of 68,000 entering the country each day transport tree-killing pests to our cities from abroad. Under these circumstances, it is critically important to maintain this program.

Among the pests already in the United States, the Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) poses one of the greatest threats to the urban forest. The ALB attacks a wide range of tree species often planted in cities, including maples, elms, sycamores, and plane trees. Any reduction in APHIS' efforts to eradicate ALB outbreaks in Ohio, Massachusetts, and the New York City area would expose cities across the East to potential loss of up to half of their street and park trees. APHIS must also be prepared to respond if the ALB is introduced to new areas which receive high volumes of imports from Asia. For example, in Portland, Oregon, ALB would kill more than one quarter of the street trees; in Seattle, close to ten percent.

The emerald ash borer (EAB) has already killed most of the ash trees in many cities in the Northeast and Midwest; this had meant the death of 20% or more of the urban forest – including many of the large trees that provide the greatest environmental services. Other areas not yet invaded by EAB face higher losses: in North Dakota, at-risk ash trees constitute up to 38% of urban trees. EAB shows no signs of slowing down. APHIS must continue programs aimed at slowing the relentless spread of EAB to vulnerable areas.

APHIS should expand efforts to contain other wood-boring insects. For example, the polyphagous and Kuroshio shot hole borers threaten 20% of the trees in Los Angeles. Across southern California, half of the trees planted in urban areas are vulnerable to these insects.

In sum, municipal 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. People even die sooner when urban forests are killed by pests. 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 FY17.

We also ask the Subcommittee to continue to support the "Specialty Crops" budget account at \$164 million. Approximately \$5 million from this account funds APHIS' program to stop spread of the sudden oak death pathogen via trade in nursery plants. Sudden oak death threatens a wide range of trees and shrubs common along streets and in gardens and parks, including several species of oaks, camellia, mountain laurel, rhododendrons, lilacs, pieris, viburnum. Of course, many of these hosts are native to eastern forests as well; these include northern red, chestnut, white, and pin oaks; sugar maple; and black walnut. In 2014, SOD infestations were detected in a total of eight nurseries in Maine, New York, Texas, and Virginia. Sudden oak death has also been detected on plants growing in private gardens in Connecticut and Massachusetts and at a commercial business site in Louisiana. Finally, the pathogen has been detected in water in streams or ponds in Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, and North Carolina; scientist do not yet know on what plants these water-associated infestations are living. Clearly, APHIS must continue to work with states in the east and south to detect and eradicate these and any new outbreaks in either commercial nurseries or other settings.

Since 1975, U.S. imports (excluding petroleum products) have risen almost six times faster than APHIS staff capability to conduct inspections of those imports. The need to have an effective inspection and response program has never been higher. We look forward to working with the Subcommittee to further the goal of funding strong invasive pest-prevention and

control programs, including preparation of risk assessments; prompt adoption of regulations that effectively clean up pathways of introduction; and increasing capability to detect introductions quickly and respond to them before they become widespread and difficult to control. Effective response, in turn, depends upon capacity to develop and test exclusion, detection, and pest-management methods. All of these depend on an adequate budget.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to share testimony as the subcommittee prepares a Fiscal Year 2016 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

For further information, please contact Faith Campbell, Vice President, Center for Invasive Species Prevention, at phytodoer@aol.com.