Alliance for Community Trees
American Forest Foundation
American Forest & Paper Association
American Nursery & Landscape Association
City of Chicago Department of Streets and Sanitation Bureau of Forestry
City of Milwaukee Department of Public Works, Forestry Division
Davey Institute
International Maple Syrup Institute
National Association of State Foresters
Natural Biodiversity
The Nature Conservancy
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
North American Maple Syrup Council, Inc.
The Pennsylvania Game Commission
Purdue University, Department of Entomology
Society of American Florists
Society of Municipal Arborists
The State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry
Union of Concerned Scientists
University of Georgia, Center for Invasive Species & Ecosystem Health
Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

April 7, 2009

The Honorable Herb Kohl
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food
and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Sam Brownback
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food
and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Fiscal Year 2010 Appropriation for the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Emerging Plant Pests

Dear Chairman Kohl and Ranking Member Brownback:

We urge the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies to increase funding substantially for the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Emerging Plant Pests program. A sharp increase in

funding is necessary in order to ensure adequate funding for eradication and control efforts targeting the Asian longhorned beetle, sudden oak death pathogen, emerald ash borer, and Sirex woodwasp. All four foreign and invasive species threaten trees in our forests and communities and related economic values worth hundreds of billions of dollars.

This coalition represents a widely diverse group of stakeholders that are unified in support of the following program areas. This statement of common goals supplements individual letters submitted to the Subcommittee by several of these organizations. Some of these individual letters address additional issues.

ASIAN LONGHORNED BEETLE

We seek an appropriation of $35 million for FY2010 to carry out eradication of the Asian longhorned beetle. Our request is nearly twice the current level of funding (approximately $19.8 million). This substantial increase is sought because of the ruinous threat that the Asian longhorned beetle poses to hardwood forests reaching from New England into Minnesota and in the West, and to the dependent hardwood timber, maple syrup, and autumn foliage tourism industries, and to street trees across the Nation. APHIS and its state partners have made considerable progress in containing the Asian longhorned beetle since it was first detected in 1996. The Chicago and some New Jersey outbreaks have been declared eradicated. However, other outbreaks in the New York metropolitan area persist and have spread to additional areas (e.g. Staten Island).

Hopes of protecting street trees nationwide and Northeastern forests suffered a heavy blow when an Asian longhorned beetle outbreak was detected in Worcester, Massachusetts in August 2008. The beetle has been present in Worcester for more than 10 years; more than 4,000 trees have become infested. There are 635,000 vulnerable trees in the immediate vicinity.

While $24 million in emergency funds from the Commodity Credit Corporation has been made available to cut infested trees in Worcester, much more will need to be done in Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey to ensure eradication of the Asian longhorned beetle. Only eradication can protect the forests across the northern states.

PHYTOPHTHORA RAMORUM

We support a request for $10 million in appropriations for FY2010 to contain Phytophthora ramorum, known commonly as sudden oak death pathogen or phytophthora leaf and stem blight pathogen. Our request would almost double the current funding level of $5.3 million. Phytophthora ramorum threatens more than 100 North American plant species, including such widespread trees in eastern forests and urban/suburban landscapes as oaks, black walnut, sugar maple, and magnolias. To protect hardwood forests across the continent, as well as our city and suburban landscapes, APHIS must address more effectively the spread of this pathogen through the commercial trade. Despite four years' of efforts, in 2008 28 nurseries still had infected plants. While significantly fewer than in 2004, when more than 200 nurseries had infected plants, the risk to forests and ornamental landscapes remains as long as the pathogen continues to be found on plants in trade. Five of the nurseries with infected plants in 2008 are in states with extensive oak-dominated forests – Florida, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, and Texas. Soil and vegetation in the nursery in Mississippi and another in Georgia continue to be infested in February 2009. This disease damages the nursery industry itself because it attacks many common ornamental species, including rhododendrons and camellias that have an annual value of more than $250 million. To put an end to this threat, APHIS needs funding to continue expanding and supporting public and private research which defines and supports improved nursery management practices that will eliminate the pathogen

SIREX WOODWASP

The FY09 Omnibus appropriations bill contains the first Congressional appropriation to combat the Sirex woodwasp, which poses a serious threat to pine resources across the Continent. We seek an increase in this appropriation to $5 million.

First detected in 2005, the Sirex woodwasp is now known to occupy an area across much of New York State, seven counties in Pennsylvania, one county in Vermont and four counties in Michigan, as well as a significant area in southern Ontario Province, and one area in Quebec Province, Canada. The woodwasp threatens valuable pine timber resources, especially those of the Southeast. Among the most vulnerable pines is loblolly pine – the backbone of the softwood timber and pulp industry in the Southeast. Other pines that are highly vulnerable to the Sirex woodwasp are other species in the Southeast (shortleaf, slash, and Virginia pines), midwest (Jack pine and red pine), and across the West (lodgepole, ponderosa, and Jeffrey). Damage to the pine timber resource could reach $17 billion if the woodwasp is allowed to spread to the Southeast and West.

Woodwasp larvae can easily be transported inside untreated wood products – especially logs destined for telephone poles and log homes; lumber, crates and pallets; and firewood. It is essential that APHIS receive $5 million in FY2010 to implement a program including regulatory and educational components aimed at preventing movement of infested wood, nursery stock, and other materials that spread the insect. Additionally this funding would support the establishment of available biocontrol organisms to manage this pest on a long term basis.

EMERALD ASH BORER

We seek an appropriation of $30 million for FY2010 to contain the emerald ash borer. This represents a decrease from the level provided in the FY09 Omnibus appropriations bill. The emerald ash borer threatens sixteen species of ash across the continent, especially in the upper Midwest and Southeast. At risk are the $25 billion ash timber industry in the Northeast, street trees across the Nation valued at $20 to $60 billion, and myriad trees found in our neighborhoods and parks. Ash represent close to a third of the total tree resource for many towns in Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska; and as much as 60 percent of the trees in some North Dakota communities. As a result, failure to contain and suppress the emerald ash borer will force cities and towns across the MidWest and Plains states to spend millions of dollars to remove dead and dying trees. For example, Ann Arbor, Michigan spent nearly $4 million to cut down 10,000 trees. Removal and replacement of the 97,000 ash trees growing along Chicago's streets is estimated to cost $150 million – and this does not include the value of the trees themselves.

The emerald ash borer outbreak is too large to be eradicated. The core of the infestation occupies much of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan and nearby Indiana and Ohio. Separate outbreaks have been detected in Illinois, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and – farther away – in Maryland, Missouri, Virginia, and West Virginia. Most of these outbreaks were caused by the movement of infested nursery stock or firewood. An appropriation at the suggested level will allow APHIS to work with partners to carry out detection surveys to locate additional emerald ash borer outbreaks; apply regulatory measures and public education to deter people from transporting infested wood; and research improved detection methods (traps and lures) and suppression methodologies – largely through biological control. Past eradication efforts utilizing widespread cutting of at-risk trees are largely discontinued and are no longer funded by APHIS.

In addition to the appropriations needed to support these line items in APHIS's Emerging Plant Pest program, we also strongly support the Congress' numerous statements urging the Administration to release emergency funds from the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) sufficient to enable full implementation of these management plans. The combination of the appropriations and the release of CCC funds are necessary to accomplish the needed tasks.

APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine works closely with the USDA Forest Service and other partners – particularly through cooperative funding agreements with state forestry, state departments of agriculture and state Land Grant Universities - to carry-out much of the survey and detection activities related to non-native introduced tree diseases and insect pests

Action now at the funding level requested would help ensure that these forest pests do not reach populations so large as to threaten trees in our forests and communities, garden nursery stock, and related economic activities worth hundreds of billions of dollars.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Bendick, Director, Government Relations, The Nature Conservancy

Robert K. Davies, New York State Forester, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Drue DeBerry, Senior Vice President, Conservation, American Forest Foundation

Dr. G. Keith Douce, Co-Director, Center for Invasive Species & Ecosystem Health, and Professor of Entomology, College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences, University of Georgia

Jay Farrell, Executive Director, National Association of State Foresters

Gary Gaudette, President, International Maple Syrup Institute

Michael A. Girard, President, North American Maple Syrup Council, Inc.

Dan Hartman, President, Society of Municipal Arborists

Joseph J. McCarthy, Senior City Forester, Bureau of Forestry, City of Chicago Department of Streets and Sanitation

Cornelius B. Murphy, Jr., Ph.D., President, The State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry

Anand B. Persad, Ph.D., B.C.E., Regional Technical Advisor, Davey Institute

Craig Regelbrugge, Vice President, Government Relations and Research, American Nursery & Landscape Association

Carl G. Roe, Executive Director, The Pennsylvania Game Commission

Thomas D. Saunders, President, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

Lin Schmale, Senior Director - Government Relations, Society of American Florists

Kristin Sewak, Director, Natural Biodiversity

David B. Sivyer, Forestry Services Manager, Forestry Division, City of Milwaukee Department of Public Works

Elizabeth VanDersarl, Vice President, Government Affairs, American Forest & Paper Association

Alice Ewen Walker, Executive Director, Alliance for Community Trees

Phyllis N. Windle, Director, Invasive Species, Union of Concerned Scientists

Steve Yaninek, Professor and Head, Department of Entomology, Purdue University