Continental Dialogue on Non-native Forest Insects and Diseases
Address *P. ramorum* Initiative

August 15, 2011

Webinar Summary

Objectives:

- *Receive presentations from USDA APHIS on:*
  - *a "white paper" on some of the major regulatory structural changes that APHIS envisions may be needed to address P. ramorum;*
  - *development of a guidance document on addressing positive P. ramorum finds in wildlands; and*
- *Provide an opportunity for participants to raise questions building on the presentations and discuss anticipated next steps for APHIS and other stakeholders.*

I. Introduction

On August 15, 2011, the Address *P. ramorum* (APR) Initiative of the Continental Dialogue on Non-Native Forest Insects and Diseases (Continental Dialogue) hosted a webinar in which a group of thirty-three representatives from federal agencies, state agencies, conservation groups, industry, and academia participated.[1]

Jennifer Peyser, RESOLVE, the webinar facilitator, welcomed the participants and gave a brief overview about the Continental Dialogue, which cultivates and catalyzes collaborative action among diverse interests to abate the threat to North American forests from non-native insects and diseases.[2] She explained that the Continental Dialogue uses "initiatives," such as the APR, as a mechanism to move forward on specific issues.

Ms. Peyser then introduced the Initiative co-leads: Susan Frankel, USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station; Jerry Lee, Monrovia Nursery; and Ken Rauscher, Michigan State Department of Agriculture, retired. Ms. Frankel provided an overview of the Initiative, noting it has been active for a year and a half, and works to bring together the various players in Sudden Oak Death (SOD) to focus on problem solving. The APR Initiative sponsored a meeting February 2011 in Washington, DC to discuss regulatory frameworks to address *P. ramorum* in nurseries and wildlands. At the August 2011 National Plant Board meeting, the Initiative presented a poster[3] on the next steps and outcomes from that meeting, and Scott Pfister, USDA APHIS, presented a white paper on some of the major regulatory structural changes that APHIS envisions may be needed to address *P. ramorum*. (This white paper is the first of two presentation topics for this webinar.)

For a copy of Dr. Hebbar's presentations, please see
http://www.continentalforestdialogue.org/events/pramorum/webinar/P_ramorum_Presentation.p

[1] See attachment for a list of participants.
[2] For more information on the Continental Dialogue, please see http://www.continentalforestdialogue.org.
[3] The poster from the August 2011 National Plant Board meeting can be found at http://www.continentalforestdialogue.org/library/activities/2011/NPB2011.APRposter_final.pdf.

df. An audio and video recording of the presentation portion of each webinar is available at http://resolv.adobeconnect.com/p3zlqegfrdc/.

II. Possible Regulatory Structural Changes to Address *P. ramorum*

Prakash Hebbar, National Program Manager for *P. ramorum*, USDA APHIS Emergency and Domestic Programs, presented on APHIS's thinking on a regulatory framework to address *P. ramorum*, as summarized in the agency's draft white paper. He provided a history of the meetings and consultations APHIS undertook in developing the concept paper and the current state of *P. ramorum* in the United States. He then summarized the results of the 2010 regulatory surveys of both regulated and non-regulated nurseries, noting that Cooperative Agricultural Pest Surveys (CAPS) were essential in getting over 3,600 surveys completed. Dr. Hebbar then reviewed the three main concepts found in the white paper and the timeline for Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) rulemaking.

Discussion

Webinar participants were given the opportunity to ask Dr. Hebbar questions following his presentation.[4] In response to questions, Dr. Hebbar and other APHIS representatives made the following points:

- **Confirmed Nursery Protocol (CNP)**: APHIS is finishing the amended CNP, which will be in place for 2012. Changes to the CNP will be reflected in the rule.
- **Surveys Efforts**: APHIS would like surveys to be conducted in interstate shipping nurseries, which propagate or ship high risk host plants. Increased surveys would be very useful in reducing the regulated areas by defining where *P. ramorum* is in nurseries.
- **Water and soil sampling**: Even when no positive plants are detected, water and soil sampling provide an extra layer of assurance that the nursery is free of *P. ramorum*; when the pathogen is not found in the plant, it may still be present in the soil or water. Positive soil and water samples would be an indicator for a nursery to adopt BMPs. Dr. Hebbar agreed with a participant, noting that when *P. ramorum* is detected in the soil or water, both host and non-host plants can move the pathogen, resulting in a situation similar to a quarantine area.
- **Funding for surveys**: APHIS hopes the new regulatory framework will allow limited resources to be better allocated. For example, not requiring surveys of non-host nurseries in regulated areas would free up both personnel and funds.
- **Best management practices (BMPs)**: An effective program would combine both voluntary BMPs and mandatory regulatory oversight. The regulatory framework focuses on regulating the positive nurseries. However, APHIS still encourages other nurseries without *P. ramorum* finds to implement BMPs. Following a positive detection, the state regulatory authority (and APHIS PPQ, if requested) will work closely with the nursery and to recommend BMPs or critical control points (CCPs) based on the needs of a particular nursery.
- **Water BMPs**: Under the new concept being discussed, if a nursery with positive water find adopts the BMP of treating water or of using another source of irrigation water, then that nursery would be allowed to ship interstate, with some amount of surveying.

[4] Please see attachment for a list of questions asked.

- **Interstate shippers in non-quarantined areas**: APHIS has been conducting outreach to interstate shippers from non-quarantined areas. Surveys in non-quarantined areas can help detect the presence of *P. ramorum*, and finds will be addressed at the nursery level. APHIS is planning on applying the framework of BMPs, sampling, and surveys used in the quarantined areas to positive nurseries, no matter the location.
- **Regulation at the nursery level**: Under the new concept discussed, not all host nurseries located in the non-quarantined areas will need certification for shipping interstate, but rather only those nurseries where *P. ramorum* has been detected will have to be certified. Regulatory framework will focus at the nursery level rather than at a county or state level as it is currently practiced. When *P. ramorum* is detected, the new concept recommends that an assessment team will be put in place to determine the critical control points, and provide a menu of BMPs for the nursery to implement.

III. Addressing *P. ramorum* Finds in Wildlands

Dr. Hebbar then presented on the development of the Wildlands Guidance document. He reviewed what is known about how the *P. ramorum* can spread, both artificially and naturally. APHIS withdrew the original "Wild land Protocol," but following stakeholder requests will be developing a guidance document that will explain the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies involved at each level of government. This guidance is meant to provide state regulatory officials, researchers, environmental groups, nurseries, industry, and others with information about how to report in the wildlands, and will include examples of monitoring protocols and BMPs. It will take the form of a "question and answer" document.

Discussion

Webinar participants were given the opportunity to ask Dr. Hebbar questions following his presentation.[5] In response to questions, Dr. Hebbar and other APHIS representatives made the following points:

- **Prevention of spread**: Because of the difficulty in addressing *P. ramorum* in wildlands and the inability to chlorinate entire water bodies, the focus has been to reduce the pathogen within the nursery and to prevent the movement of the pathogen. There are experiments ongoing on how to prevent the movement of the pathogen from an affected nursery to the stream using simple sand filters. States are working with universities to develop methods to prevent the movement of *P. ramorum* from nurseries into wildlands.
- **Response to wildland finds**: A positive find in soil or water in wildlands would trigger additional survey and monitoring at that site. APHIS distinguishes between understory plants and bole hosts, and the risk would be different if the pathogen had spread to a bole host. However, if there is widespread infection through the understory in a sensitive area, that area would be placed under quarantine. There is no environmentally feasible method to treat a large-scale incidence of *P. ramorum* in wildlands at the moment, although the USDA Agricultural Research Service is working on developing some solutions.
- **Small-scale finds**: Dr. Hebbar pointed to the 2009 find of infected salal plants in Pierce County, WA next to a positive stream as a small-scale find. Those plants and other host plants along the stream were removed. That find was closely associated with a nursery.

[5] Please see attachment for a list of questions asked.

Participants exchanged questions on how to define small-scale versus large-scale finds; APHIS is interested in further feedback on this topic.

- **Parity with other countries**: Following a find in the UK, APHIS is in the process of listing Japanese larch as a host plant. The agency wants comparability with how the British and Canadian are listing *P. ramorum* host plants and will generally include hosts found in other countries on its host list.

Several meeting participants shared other efforts currently underway. The industry participant informed the group that USDA held a meeting with industry in July on developing BMPs and CCPs that could be broadly applied to a number of pests and pathogens. Given budget limitations, developing responses that are broadly applicable to many pests is likely to be the path moving forward. Another participant noted that the University of California-Davis is doing something similar and holding meetings on how to address all quarantined pests, not just *P. ramorum*.

IV. Closing Remarks

Ken Rauscher, one of the Initiative co-leads, reflected on the progress that has been made on *P. ramorum* since the discussion was first begun. He relayed that the poster presented at the National Plant Board meeting was very well received, and that individuals from around the country saw some possible solutions to the problem. He expressed appreciation for the direction APHIS is moving with the concept relayed in the white paper and the wildlands guidance document.

Dr. Hebbar thanked participants and invited additional thoughts and comments. Participants can reach him at prakash.hebbar@aphis.usda.gov; Stacy Scott, the USDA *P. ramorum* Western Region Program, at stacy.e.scott@aphis.usda.gov; and Anthony Man-Son-Hing, the USDA *P. ramorum* Eastern Region Program Manager at anthony.man-son-hing@aphis.usda.gov.

Ms. Peyser informed the group that the APR Initiative will continue the conversation at the upcoming Continental Dialogue October 5-6 meeting[6] in Boulder, CO and potentially future webinars. Participants who have not already signed up for the Initiative and who would like to receive future notifications about Initiative activities should do so online at the Continental Dialogue website (http://www.continentalforestdialogue.org/initiatives/default.aspx).

[6] For information and registration for the Seventh Continental Dialogue Meeting, please see http://www.continentalforestdialogue.org/events/dialogue/2011-10-05/index.html.

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Questions Asked on the APHIS White Paper:

What is the status of the confirmed nursery protocol in the proposed new program?

Since there is much less area in the proposed regulated area, will there be increased "other survey" efforts?

Will soil and water sampling be done even when no positive plants are detected?

Would it be correct to assume if there would be less "required Survey" there would be fewer dollars to pay for "other survey"?

Will voluntary best management practices programs be accepted as an alternative to survey for nurseries growing high risk plants in regulated counties? What about a BMP program for nurseries that have not been positive for *P. ramorum*?

How will new positive nurseries be detected in non-quarantined areas (not in the environment)? Will this method be used for all interstate shippers in all states?

Under the framework of proposed changes, the point 2 concept states "Nursery doesn't use the water for irrigation." Could you clarify how this fits in?

Will there be an objective evaluation system to determine if a nursery's BMPs are adequate? If a nursery becomes positive (using BMPs) – would there be an evaluation? If the nursery believes they're adequate, how do regulators determine to the contrary?

One of the concepts is that counties will be regulated based on positive nurseries within the county, correct? If a nursery in a regulated county with no history of *P. ramorum* voluntarily enters a BMP program, will it have to be surveyed?

Questions Asked on the Wildland guidance:

Has there been any "small-scale" pathogen spread detected? If so, where? How are state agencies responding?

What is the definition of "small-scale"?

A positive on a plant will trigger a certain activity. Would a soil or water positive in a wildland trigger additional survey or monitoring at that site?

Will Japanese larch be added to the host list?

If there is extensive spread in the understory, would APHIS undertake increased regulatory effort even without infection of a bole host?