

MEMORANDUM

TO: Continental Dialogue on Non-Native Forest Insects and Diseases Participants
FROM: Dialogue Steering Committee
SUBJECT: Update on Workgroup Progress Since December 2007 Dialogue Meeting
DATE: November 7, 2008

Import Plants Not Pests: Changes to Q-37 [WG #1]

December 07: Priority issue; proceed with proposed actions outlined at meeting

UPDATE: As reported at the December 2007 meeting, the group developed a consensus set of recommendations for USDA. Members worked on the multi-state campaign promoting the Consensus Recommendations developed by the Dialogue regarding plants for planting. The first visit to Indiana (by Faith Campbell of The Nature Conservancy) went smoothly, with Faith encountering a positive reception from various stakeholders. Groups such as the Department of Natural Resources and the Indiana Native Plant Society expressed their interest in the consensus recommendations, and were encouraging of the efforts. Faith also visited three more key states (FL, GA, and OR).

Each potential partner is being encouraged to contact U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Edward T. Schafer to help expedite the Q-37 rulemaking, and if partners are willing, to promote the acceptance of the Consensus Recommendations. To simplify and align the messages that partner organizations are spreading, they will be provided with white papers, the Consensus Recommendations, talking points, and other materials. This will allow partners to rapidly and conveniently take action to promote the revision of Q-37 and potentially advocate for the adoption of the Consensus Recommendations on the behalf of their organization. Already, staff of The Nature Conservancy in Virginia is carrying the effort on their own.

To date, letters have been sent to Secretary Shafer by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida Native Plant Society, Florida Audubon Society, Florida Urban Forestry, Georgia Department of Agriculture, Indiana Native Plant and Wildflower Society, Indiana chapter of the Society of American Foresters, Mississippi Department of Agriculture, Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski, Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon chapter of the Society of American Foresters, Oregon Invasive Species Council, Oregon Forest Industries Council, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and the Virginia Division of Forestry.

Additionally, efforts have been underway to get op-eds in local newspapers in coordination with our visits, and to place quarter page eye-catching advertisements that explain in laymen's terms the importance of our efforts.

Level of Protection [WG #1]

December 07: Mid-range priority; sub-group proceed with development of RfP for consultant study to articulate the need for a National Level of Protection

UPDATE: Some calls but no significant progress.

Solid Wood Packing: An Important Pathway [WG #2]

December 07: Short-term effort; proceed with proposed actions outlined at meeting

UPDATE: 16 groups signed the Workgroup letter to the Secretary of Agriculture encouraging the adoption of domestic standards for solid wood packaging based on existing international standards. The group signing the letter represented a very broad cross section of interests including organizations with different proposals for solving the issues but with a common understanding of the importance of addressing the issue as quickly as possible. The letter was sent on June 12; and the Secretary sent a brief response in mid-August. The group has since raised the concern in a meeting with the Secretary's chief of staff and anticipates further engagement in the coming year.

Keeping the Green Industry Green: Sustainability and Best Management Practices [WG #3]

December 07: Long-term effort; establish as an independent Workgroup and proceed with effort to define objectives and strategy for this Workgroup in the first quarter of 2008.

UPDATE: No significant activity

Considering Changes to the Federal Plant Protection Act [WG #4]

December 07: High priority issue; varying levels of energy around the different aspects of this effort (i.e., reimbursement, liability, pre-emption); the group would benefit from an in-person Workgroup meeting at which they can define their strategy and prioritize objectives.

UPDATE: The Workgroup focused efforts on the draft 2008-2012 National Invasive Species Management Plan. First, members of the workgroup successfully requested an extension of the comment period. Immediately following that effort, the workgroup used the additional time to draft a letter to Lori Williams (NISC Executive Director) covering the five long-term Strategic Goals in the revised management plan. The 13 signatories of this letter were a diverse group of Continental Dialogue members. Special thanks to Michael Buck, Faith Campbell, Rick Krause, Terry McDill, Ken Rauscher, and Lin Schmale for their outstanding efforts.

Money in the Bank: Finding Funds for Needed Actions [WG #5]

December 07: High priority issue; review proposed actions and re-assess next steps later

UPDATE: Members of the Continental Forest Dialogue actively lobbied Congress in an effort to encourage increased funding for the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) programs targeting the eradication of the Asian longhorned beetle and the management of emerald ash borer, sudden oak death, and Sirex woodwasp. In February, 16 Dialogue members signed a joint

statement in support of APHIS funding for these pests; 14 member groups signed the statement on USDA Forest Service (USFS) funding. Congressional staff members have been quite impressed by the number of groups and the breadth of interests represented- a testament to the effectiveness of the Dialogue approach.

A sub-team consisting of Faith Campbell of TNC and Rick Pasco of McLeod, Watkinson & Miller met with more than 100 offices to educate them about the threat these pests pose and the importance of adequately funding APHIS' response. Nadine Block of AF&PA participated in two visits and was joined by her colleague Brett Smith in meeting with staff representing House subcommittee ranking Republican Jack Kingston of Georgia.

Faith, Nadine and Brett, and Gene Cross, Harry Fulton, and Mike Evans of the Plant Board; Michael Buck, Mike Countess, Ian MacFarlane, and Leah MacSwords of the National Association of State Foresters played crucial roles in communicating with key offices, especially in the South where we are trying to get first-time appropriations to address the Sirex woodwasp.

Combined efforts resulted in 23 senators signing a letter to the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee that was sent on April 24. Four of the signers are on Appropriations (Durbin, Mikulski, Specter, Reed); 5 are on Agriculture (Lincoln, Stabenow, Brown, Casey, Lugar). 12 House members signed the companion letter in that chamber.

It is too early to know whether these efforts will bear fruit in the form of increased appropriations. A conflict between Congress and the President could mean that an appropriations bill is unlikely to be signed before January 2009. However, the staff we are meeting with, our professional lobbying colleagues, and others all agree that our continued presence is important to provide a foundation for the future.

It is also clear that we are helping this issue get much more attention than ever before. Many of these offices confess they are learning about the threat from pests to their state for the first time.

Visionary Fund [WG #5]

December 07: Long-term effort; interested Dialogue participants need to define objectives, and then engage industry stakeholders

UPDATE: No significant progress.

Addressing Issues Associated with Transport of Firewood [WG #6]

December 07: High priority issue; proceed with proposed actions outlined at meeting

UPDATE: The Don't Move Firewood Web site (www.dontmovefirewood.org) went 'live' on July 2. The site currently strives to be at the cutting edge of conservation initiatives; ideally, this workgroup's innovative approach will serve as an example for future actions that extend beyond the Continental Dialogue.

The "Don't Move Firewood" Web site is part of a campaign designed to transcend a typical informational site. Numerous advanced "Web 2.0" technologies such as blogs, Facebook-style

interactive sites, and viral videos (such as those found on YouTube) are in development to self-propagate our message to our target audience. This Web site will serve as a starting point for larger efforts to engage firewood users of all stripes with the message that the movement of firewood is a threat to the health of our nation's forests.

One crucial element to this Web site will be keeping the content current and topical. To that end, we are actively seeking volunteer bloggers – anyone with an interest in forest health issues is welcome. All that is required is that they have the time and desire to write a one to four paragraph article roughly once a month on virtually any topic that pertains to the spread of forest pests and firewood.

Additionally, workgroup leaders Jodie Ellis and Frank Lowenstein have submitted a proposal for funding to expand the scope of the Web site. The proposal's scope includes unconventional advertising and outreach efforts with the goal of driving more visitors to the Web site.