

regulated article may be introduced. The regulations set forth the permit application requirements and the notification procedures for the importation, interstate movement, or release into the environment of a regulated article.

On October 21, 2005, APHIS received a permit application (APHIS No. 05-294-02r) from the University of Florida in Marianna, FL, for a field trial using lines of transgenic Argentine bahiagrass. Permit application 05-294-02r describes two transgenic lines of Argentine bahiagrass, *Paspalum notatum* Flugge cv. Argentine:

Line 'B9' has been genetically engineered to express the phosphinothricin acetyl transferase (bar) gene from *Streptomyces hygroscopicus*, which confers resistance to glufosinate herbicides. Expression of this gene is controlled by the polyubiquitin (*ubi*) promoter, *ubi* 5' flanking region and the *ubi* first intron sequences from *Zea mays*, and the 35S 3' region from Cauliflower Mosaic Virus (CaMV).

In addition to the gene sequences above, line 'P' has also been genetically engineered to express the neomycin phosphotransferase gene (nptII) from *Escherichia coli*, which confers resistance to the antibiotic kanamycin. Expression of this gene is controlled by the enhanced 35S promoter from CaMV, heat shock protein 70 (HSP70) intron from *Zea mays*, and the 35S 3' region from CaMV.

Constructs were inserted into the recipient organisms by microprojectile bombardment.

The subject transgenic grasses are considered regulated articles under the regulations in 7 CFR part 340 because they were created using donor sequences from plant pests. The purpose of this proposed field test is for research on transgenic bahiagrass plants, particularly to investigate the frequency of cross-hybridization between transgenic Argentine bahiagrass with different bahiagrass cultivars under field conditions. Additionally, the data gathered during this study will be used to assess the confined status of this field release and refine the confinement conditions necessary for future releases of this grass species.

On March 7, 2006, APHIS published a notice<sup>1</sup> in the **Federal Register** (71 FR 11372-11373, Docket No. APHIS-2006-

0022) announcing the availability of an environmental assessment (EA) for the proposed field trial. During the 30-day comment period, APHIS received no comments. Only typographical errors in the EA have been corrected since its draft form, and these do not change the substance of the EA.

Pursuant to its regulations (7 CFR part 340) promulgated under the Plant Protection Act, APHIS has determined that this field trial will not pose a risk of the introduction or dissemination of a plant pest. Additionally, based upon analysis described in the EA, APHIS has determined that the action proposed in Alternative C of the EA, to issue the permit with additional permit conditions, will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. You may read the finding of no significant impact (FONSI) and decision notice on the Internet or in the APHIS reading room (see **ADDRESSES** above).

The EA and FONSI were prepared in accordance with: (1) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), (2) regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500-1508), (3) USDA regulations implementing NEPA (7 CFR part 1b), and (4) APHIS' NEPA Implementing Procedures (7 CFR part 372). Copies of the EA and FONSI are available from the individual listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

**Authority:** 7 U.S.C. 7701-7772 and 7781-7786; 31 U.S.C. 9701; 7 CFR 2.22, 2.80, and 371.3.

Done in Washington, DC, this 17th day of May 2006.

**Kevin Shea,**

*Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.*

[FR Doc. E6-7820 Filed 5-22-06; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3410-34-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. APHIS-2006-0076]

#### Availability of an Environmental Assessment for a Biological Control Agent for Old World Climbing Fern

**AGENCY:** Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice of availability and request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** We are advising the public that the Animal and Plant Health

Inspection Service has prepared an environmental assessment relative to the control of Old World climbing fern, *Lygodium microphyllum*. The environmental assessment considers the effects of, and alternatives to, the release of a nonindigenous gall mite, *Floracarus perrepae*, for the biological control of Old World climbing fern in Florida. We are making the environmental assessment available to the public for review and comment.

**DATES:** We will consider all comments that we receive on or before June 22, 2006.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments by either of the following methods: Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to <http://www.regulations.gov> and, in the lower "Search Regulations and Federal Actions" box, select "Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service" from the agency drop-down menu, then click on "Submit." In the Docket ID column, select APHIS-2006-0076 to submit or view public comments and to view supporting and related materials available electronically. Information on using Regulations.gov, including instructions for accessing documents, submitting comments, and viewing the docket after the close of the comment period, is available through the site's "User Tips" link.

**Postal Mail/Commercial Delivery:** Please send four copies of your comment (an original and three copies) to Docket No. APHIS-2006-0076, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Please state that your comment refers to Docket No. APHIS-2006-0076.

**Reading Room:** You may read any comments that we receive on the environmental assessment in our reading room. The reading room is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 690-2817 before coming.

**Other Information:** Additional information about APHIS and its programs is available on the Internet at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov>.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Dr. Joseph Vorgetts, Entomologist, Pest Permit Evaluation Branch, PPQ, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 133, Riverdale, MD 20737-1237; (301) 734-5405.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

<sup>1</sup> To view the notice and EA, go to <http://www.regulations.gov>, click on the "Advanced Search" tab, and select "Docket Search." In the Docket ID field, enter APHIS-2006-0022, then click on "Submit." Clicking on the Docket ID link in the search results page will produce a list of all documents in the docket.

## Background

Old World climbing fern, *Lygodium microphyllum*, is a climbing fern that has a large native range that extends through much of the Old World tropics. It has become established in central and southern peninsular Florida, where it grows in a number of wetland and mesic (having a moderate supply of moisture) habitats including hammocks, cypress swamps, flatwoods, bayheads, and disturbed sites.

The climbing fern is a highly invasive, exotic weed that climbs over plants, including tall trees, to form massive walls of vegetation. It also forms thick mats on the ground that smother native plants. New infestations can arise great distances from existing populations because the weed produces millions of spores that are spread by wind and other physical carriers. A single spore is capable of starting a new infestation. In addition, dense strands of Old World climbing fern present a major fire hazard.

In Florida, the potential distribution of this weed includes all habitats from Lake Okeechobee south. It also has the potential to invade the Gulf Coast of Mexico and southern Texas.

The Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has received a permit application for the release of a nonindigenous gall mite, *Floracarus perrepae* (Knihinicki & Boczek) (Acariformes: Eriophyidae), for the biological control (biocontrol) of Old World climbing fern in Florida. The purpose of the proposed release is to reduce the severity of infestations of *L. microphyllum* in Florida.

The proposed biocontrol agent, *F. perrepae*, is a gall mite in the insect family Eriophyidae and is native to Australia and tropical Asia. The adult mites feed on young leaflets of the target weed, *L. microphyllum*, inducing the leaf margins to curl into galls. Female mites lay an average 60 eggs inside a gall. The eggs hatch in 5 days and immature mites feed on the specialized tissue within the gall, requiring 4 days to become adults. Galled leaflets are often infected by secondary ambient pathogens and have reduced life spans. Plants infested with the mite have slower rates of growth than uninfested plants.

The mite is also host specific. Host specificity tests conducted in Australia indicate that *F. perrepae* is specific to only two *Lygodium* species (the target weed *L. microphyllum* and the Australian fern *Lygodium reticulatum*).

Therefore, APHIS is considering issuing a permit for the release of *F.*

*perrepae* into the continental United States in order to reduce the severity and extent of Old World climbing fern infestation. APHIS' review and analysis of the proposed action and its alternatives are documented in detail in an environmental assessment (EA) entitled, "Field Release of *Floracarus perrepae* Knihinicki & Boczek (Acariformes: Eriophyidae), a Mite for Biological Control of Old World Climbing Fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*), in the Continental United States" (March 2006). We are making the EA available to the public for review and comment. We will consider all comments that we receive on or before the date listed under the heading **DATES** at the beginning of this notice.

The EA may be viewed on the Regulations.gov Web site or in our reading room (see **ADDRESSES** above for instructions for accessing Regulations.gov and information on the location and hours of the reading room). You may request paper copies of the EA by calling or writing to the person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**. Please refer to the title of the environmental assessment when requesting copies.

The EA has been prepared in accordance with: (1) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), (2) regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500–1508), (3) USDA regulations implementing NEPA (7 CFR part 1), and (4) APHIS' NEPA Implementing Procedures (7 CFR part 372).

Done in Washington, DC, this 17th day of May 2006.

**Kevin Shea,**

*Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.*

[FR Doc. E6-7823 Filed 5-22-06; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 3410-34-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Rural Housing Service

### Rural Business-Cooperative Service

### Farm Service Agency

### Notice of Request for Extension of a Currently Approved Information Collection

**AGENCIES:** Rural Housing Service, Rural Business-Cooperative Service, Farm Service Agency, USDA.

**ACTION:** Proposed collection; comments requested.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the intention of USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Rural Development, henceforth collectively known as Rural Development, or individually as Housing and Community Programs, Business and Cooperative Programs, Utility Programs, to request an extension for a currently approved information collection in support of compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other applicable environmental requirements.

**DATES:** Comments on this notice must be received by July 24, 2006 to be assured of consideration.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Donna Meyer, Senior Environmental Protection Specialist, Program Support Staff, Housing and Community Facilities Programs, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Stop 0761, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250-0761, Telephone (202) 720-9619, e-mail: [donna.meyer@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:donna.meyer@wdc.usda.gov).

### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

*Title:* 7 CFR 1940 Subpart G, "Environmental Program."

*OMB Number:* 0575-0094.

*Expiration Date of Approval:* November 30, 2006.

*Type of Request:* Extension of a currently approved information collection.

*Abstract:* The information collection under OMB Number 0575-0094 enables the Agencies to effectively administer the policies, methods, and responsibilities for compliance with the NEPA and other applicable environmental laws, executive orders, and regulations.

The NEPA requires Federal agencies to consider the potential environmental impacts of proposed major Federal actions on the quality of the human environment during agency planning and decision-making processes. For Rural Development and FSA to comply, it is necessary that they have information on the types of environmental resources on site or in the vicinity of an Applicant's proposed project that could be impacted by Rural Development or FSA's Federal action. The Applicant is the logical source for providing this information. In fact, the vast majority of Federal Agencies that assist non-Federal Applicants in sponsoring projects require their Applicants to submit such