

Background

Section 375 of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act, 7 U.S.C. 2008j, created the National Sheep Industry Improvement Center (NSIIC) to strengthen the infrastructure of the sheep and goat industry. The NSIIC provided loans and grants for business ventures where normal commercial credit or funding was not available. Section 375(j) of the Farm Bill legislation required the privatization of the NSIIC to occur on the earlier of its receiving a certain level of Federal funding or September 30, 2006. The legislation required a transition plan, to be approved by the Secretary of Agriculture, that provides for a private successor entity that would have the same purposes and be able to continue the activities of the NSIIC. The Secretary of Agriculture has approved a privatization plan that was triggered by the September 30, 2006 deadline. The NSIIC ceased operations on September 30, 2006. The American Sheep and Goat Center became the successor private organization on October 1, 2006. All assets and liabilities of the NSIIC have now been transferred to the private American Sheep and Goat Center. The transition plan is completed as of May 23, 2007.

Dated: May 16, 2007.

Douglas Faulkner,

Acting Under Secretary, Rural Development.
[FR Doc. E7-9932 Filed 5-22-07; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-XY-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. APHIS-2007-0047]

Notice of Request for Extension of Approval of an Information Collection; Bees and Related Articles

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Extension of approval of an information collection; comment request.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's intention to request an extension of approval of an information collection associated with regulations for the importation of bees and related articles.

DATES: We will consider all comments that we receive on or before July 23, 2007.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by either of the following methods:

Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to <http://www.regulations.gov>, select "Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service" from the agency drop-down menu, then click "Submit." In the Docket ID column, select APHIS-2007-0047 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-2007-0047, 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-2007-0047.

Reading Room: You may read any comments that we receive on this docket 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: For information on an information collection associated with regulations for the importation of bees and related articles, contact Dr. Wayne Wehling, Entomologist, Pest Permit Evaluations, PPQ, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 133, Riverdale, MD 20737; (301) 734-8757. For copies of more detailed information on the information collection, contact Mrs. Celeste Sickles, APHIS' Information Collection Coordinator, at (301) 734-7477.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Bees and Related Articles.

OMB Number: 0579-0207.

Type of Request: Extension of approval of an information collection.

Abstract: Under the Honeybee Act (7 U.S.C. 281-286), the Secretary is authorized to prohibit or restrict the importation of honeybees and honeybee semen to prevent the introduction into the United States of diseases and

parasites harmful to honeybees and of undesirable species such as the African honeybee. This authority has been delegated to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

Further, the Plant Protection Act (PPA) (7 U.S.C. 7701 *et seq.*) authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to prohibit or restrict the importation, entry, or interstate movement of plants, plant products, and other articles to prevent the introduction of plant pests into the United States or their dissemination within the United States. As with the Honeybee Act, APHIS has delegated authority for the PPA.

The establishment of certain bee diseases, parasites, or undesirable species and subspecies of honeybees in the United States could cause substantial reductions in pollination by bees. These reductions could cause serious damage to crops and other plants and result in substantial financial losses to American agriculture.

Regulations for the importation of exotic bee diseases and parasites through the importation of bees other than honeybees, certain beekeeping products, and used beekeeping equipment are contained in 7 CFR part 322, "Bees, Beekeeping Byproducts, and Beekeeping Equipment." These regulations require the use of certain information collection activities, including: An application for permit, appeals for denial of permit application and cancellation of permit, request for risk assessment, inspection report of containment facilities, request for release of containment, transit documentation, export certificate, notice of arrival, packaging and labeling, and recordkeeping by containment facilities.

We are asking the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to approve our use of these information collection activities for an additional 3 years.

The purpose of this notice is to solicit comments from the public (as well as affected agencies) concerning our information collection. These comments will help us:

(1) Evaluate whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Agency, including whether the information will have practical utility;

(2) Evaluate the accuracy of our estimate of the burden of the information collection, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;

(3) Enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and

(4) Minimize the burden of the information collection on those who are to respond, through use, as appropriate, of automated, electronic, mechanical, and other collection technologies, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses.

Estimate of burden: The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 2.4338 hours per response.

Respondents: Importers and shippers of bees and related articles, foreign governments, and containment facilities.

Estimated annual number of respondents : 869.

Estimated annual number of responses per respondent: 1.

Estimated annual number of responses: 869.

Estimated total annual burden on respondents: 2,115 hours. (Due to averaging, the total annual burden hours may not equal the product of the annual number of responses multiplied by the reporting burden per response.)

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Done in Washington, DC, this 17th day of May 2007.

Kevin Shea,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. E7-9897 Filed 5-22-07; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-34-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. APHIS-2007-0060]

Emerald Ash Borer; Availability of an Environmental Assessment

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability and request for comments.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that an environmental assessment has been prepared by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service relative to the release of three insect parasitoid species for the biological control of the emerald ash borer *Agrilus planipennis*. The environmental assessment documents our review and analysis of environmental impacts associated with the release of these biological control agents. We are making this environmental assessment available to the public for review and comment.

DATES: We will consider all comments that we receive on or before June 22, 2007.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by either of the following methods:

- **Federal eRulemaking Portal:** Go to <http://www.regulations.gov>, select "Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service" from the agency drop-down menu, then click "Submit." In the Docket ID column, select APHIS-2007-0060 to submit or view public comments and to view supporting and related materials available electronically. Information on using [Regulations.gov](http://www.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-2007-0060, 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-2007-0060.

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. Juli Gould, Entomologist, Otis Pest Survey, Detection, and Exclusion Laboratory, PPQ, APHIS, Building 1398, Otis ANGB, MA 02542-5008; (508) 563-9303 ext. 220.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The emerald ash borer (EAB) (*Agrilus planipennis*) is a destructive wood-boring insect that attacks ash trees (*Fraxinus* spp., including green ash, white ash, black ash, and several horticultural varieties of ash). The insect, which is indigenous to Asia and known to occur in China, Korea, Japan, Mongolia, the Russian Far East, Taiwan, and Canada, eventually kills healthy ash

trees after it bores beneath their bark and disrupts their vascular tissues.

The EAB regulations in 7 CFR 301.53-1 through 301.53-9 restrict the interstate movement of regulated articles from quarantined areas to prevent the artificial spread of EAB into noninfested areas of the United States. The States of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio and portions of the State of Michigan are currently designated as quarantined areas. We are also in the process of establishing a quarantine in Prince George's County, MD.

Despite State and Federal quarantines designed to contain EAB, the lack of effective methods to detect EAB-infested trees and the large area of EAB infestation has resulted in a shift in strategy by regulatory agencies from area-wide eradication to eradication in outlying areas and containment in the core infestation area. In the United States, EAB eradication efforts involve the removal of all ash trees within a specified radius around known infestations. However, by the time an infestation is discovered and treated, EAB has usually already dispersed outside the eradication zone. Besides natural dispersal, the spread of EAB has been accelerated through human-assisted movement of infested ash firewood, timber, solid wood packing materials, and nursery stock. As EAB spreads throughout North America, regulatory agencies, land managers, and the public are seeking sustainable management tools such as biological control to reduce EAB population densities and to slow its spread.

APHIS has completed an environmental assessment that examines the potential effects on the quality of the human environment that may be associated with the release of three specific biological control agents to control infestations of EAB within the continental United States. APHIS and the Forest Service propose to release the three parasitoids into the environment of the continental United States for the purpose of reducing EAB populations. These parasitoids are known to attack EAB consistently in its native habitat in China. Initial releases of each parasitoid are planned for summer 2007. Post-release monitoring of the spread and establishment of each parasitoid species and impacts on EAB and non-target wood-boring beetles will also be conducted.

APHIS' review and analysis of the potential environmental impacts associated with this biological control action are documented in detail in an environmental assessment entitled "Proposed Release of Three Parasitoids for the Biological Control of the Emerald