

**U.S. Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Plant Protection and Quarantine**

2009 National Plant Board Report- 2008 Cactus Moth Program

The Cactus Moth Program started the year with additional cactus moth detections beyond the leading edge in Alabama into the Mississippi Barrier Island of Petit Bois in January 2008. A Rapid Response team was deployed several times to this barrier island to delimit and remove the cactus infestation manually. This was followed by two flight periods of sterile cactus moth (CM) releases to the island during the spring and summer flights. The next island west of Petit Bois, Horn Island, was detected with wild adult cactus moths in April, 2008. This larger cactus rich island was then the focus of rapid response and sterile releases over the last two cactus moth flights in the summer and fall. Petit Bois was still under a careful visual survey and manual control program while the releases were focused on Horn Island. A total **94,271 sterile moths were released** mainly on Horn Island. This strategy of rapid response surveys and strategically planned releases of sterile cactus moths prevented the further westward spread of the cactus moth pest from these Mississippi Barrier islands. Good detection programs on the mainland of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama indicate that the pest has not spread to additional areas. Many states in the western part of the US have also been surveying for cactus moth without any detections in those critical cactus area. **Wild cactus moth captures have reduced from 4,541 in 2007 to 1,834 in 2008.**

Cactus removal has been a key control tactic throughout the program area with massive amount of the host being removed from areas that served as breeding grounds and colonization sites for the cactus moth pest (**21.8 tons removed**). Dauphin Island and Fort Morgan in Alabama have been mostly cleaned of cactus host plants with only a few stands left where property owners wanted to maintain the plants and some regrowth occurring. Pensacola Beach was cleaned of most host cactus at the end of the summer which has further reduced the host and pest load that was threatening the delicate barrier program around the Mobile Bay. The goal is to create an area with low amounts of host cactus between Dauphin Island, Alabama and Pensacola Beach, Florida. In this manner a barrier program can be maintained that should stop the natural westward spread of cactus moth into the western US and Mexico. A quarantine regulation is also pending to regulate cactus plants in the nursery trade.

APHIS PPQ hosted a Cactus Moth International Review during the summer of 2008 in conjunction with colleagues from Mexico (SAGARPA SENASICA) who are conducting their own CM eradication program in Quintana Roo, Mexico and from NAPPO. The review team found the US program conducting appropriate program actions and also made recommendations to improve the sterile release production and the research and development component of the program.

The CM suppression and eradication efforts have been facilitated by an outstanding cooperative effort that include APHIS PPQ from many states and headquarters, PPQ CPHST; the USDA's Agriculture Research Service (ARS) from Tifton, Georgia and Tallahassee, Florida; the Florida Division of Plant Industry (DPI) out of Gainesville, Florida; Mississippi State University; the US Geological Survey (USGS) out of North Carolina and Mississippi State; the SENASICA-SAGARPA (Plant Protection General Directorate) and the Plant Protection Committee of Quintana Roo, Mexico, through a USDA-SAGARPA Cooperative Agreement; the North American Plant Protection Organization (NAPPO) and many others.