

## APHIS Biotech Trees Comment Summary

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### Key Points:

- ! APHIS should adopt comprehensive regulations specific to the field release of GE trees, including detailed guidelines on the steps needed to demonstrate an acceptable level of risk. These regulations should first be proposed in draft and extensive opportunity provided for comment by the public and outside experts.
- ! APHIS should revise its NEPA regulations to provide that normally a full EIS will be needed for proposed GE tree field releases, except when extraordinary circumstances exist.
- ! APHIS should comply with Executive Order 13112 on Invasive Species by adopting guidelines to assist in weighing potential benefits and harms, and risk minimization, connected with field releases of new tree varieties (GE or not) that either may become new invasive species themselves or that are intended to affect the status of an existing invasive species, including weeds, pests, and pathogens.
- ! APHIS should pursue a memorandum of understanding to obtain early consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with respect to potential Endangered Species Act issues presented by GE tree releases.

If APHIS achieves these four recommended Key Points, then its future decisions on GE trees will be more bulletproof and environmental groups would be less likely to sue.

Due to the tremendous public and private forestry resources and other interests potentially at risk, and the generally high degree of uncertainty regarding the potentially irreversible long-term impacts of GE forest trees, the highest level of scientific scrutiny and impact analysis is needed. APHIS should impose a moratorium on any field releases until it achieves the four steps mentioned.

Thank you.