Finding of No Significant Impact
For
Eradication of South American Cactus Moth, *Cactoblastis cactorum*,
from 11 Parishes in Southeastern Louisiana
Environmental Assessment
September 2009

In September 2009, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), prepared an environmental assessment (EA) that analyzed the environmental consequences of a treatment program to eradicate the South American cactus moth (*Cactoblastis cactorum* Berg) from 11 parishes in Southeastern Louisiana (Cameron, Iberia, Jefferson, Lafourche, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. Mary, Terrebonne, and Vermilion). By eradicating cactus moth from Lousiana, APHIS hopes to prevent its western spread into Texas, Arizona, and the country of Mexico. The EA was made available for a 30-day public comment period ending on October 19, 2009. One comment,which was related to property access rather than environmental issues, was received during the comment period. The comment will be responded to by program personnel, as appropriate. The EA, incorporated by reference in this document, is available at www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/ea/cactus_moth.shtml and from—

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The EA analyzed two alternatives: (1) no action by APHIS to eradicate the South American cactus moth, and (2) the proposed action, to use survey, hand removal, machine removal, burning, scorching, chemical treatment, and SIT to eradicate cactus moth from 11 parishes in Louisiana.

APHIS has determined that the preferred alternative will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. APHIS' finding of no significant impact for this action was based upon the expected limited environmental consequences, as expressed in the EA. The EA evaluated the potential environmental effects of the various treatment options on human health and nontarget organisms. Any impact from visual surveys and pheromone-baited traps would consist of minor disturbances virtually indistinguishable from background activities for the surveys, and some incidental mortality of nontarget insects which might inadvertently enter the pheromone-baited traps. Any impacts from mechanical and hand removal of cactus plants will be localized and minor in nature. The use of herbicides will also be localized due to the methods of application (spot treatment from a backpack sprayer or painted onto root stumps) and analysis indicates that anticipated residue levels are not expected to exceed levels of concern. Controlled burning will only be employed in small areas to expose cactus which may be hidden in dense brush and weeds. Controlled burning is a commonly used land management tool in the areas to be treated and will only be done according to a prescribed burn plan after consultation and coordination with local authorities. It is anticipated to result in only minor impact to the local environment. Scorching of

cactus pads and release of sterile insects are not anticipated to result in any noticeable impact to the environment.

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and its implementing regulations require Federal agencies to ensure that their actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of threatened or endangered species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat. APHIS prepared a biological assessment (BA) and has determined that the proposed program will have no effect on the Gulf sturgeon, pallid sturgeon, or the green hawksbill, Kemp's ridley, leatherback, or loggerhead sea turtles. APHIS has also determined that the proposed program may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, the Louisiana black bear and its critical habitat, piping plover and its critical habitat, or the brown pelican, and has requested concurrence with this determination from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). FWS concurred with APHIS's BA in a letter dated September 30, 2009, and guidance for compliance with the ESA requirements was provided to the program by Environmental and Risk Analysis Services in an email dated October 5, 2009. FWS also recommended that APHIS take certain measures to ensure the safety of and avoid disturbance of colonial nesting wading and shore birds that may be in the action area. APHIS plans to comply with these recommendations throughout the eradication program.

The Permits/Mitigation Support Division of the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is charged with implementing the Louisiana Coastal Resources Program (LCRP) under authority of the State and Local Coastal Resources Management Act, as amended (Act 361, La. R.S. 49:214.21 et seq). This law seeks to protect, develop, and, where feasible, restore or enhance the resources of the State's coastal zone. Its broad intent is to encourage multiple uses of resources and adequate economic growth while minimizing adverse effects of one resource use upon another without imposing undue restrictions on any user. The Louisiana DNR determined that the APHIS program is consistent with the LCRP.

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), as amended, requires Federal agencies or their applicants to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic structural and archaeological properties. Fort Livingston is designated as an historic site under NHPA. It is a 19th century coastal defense fort located on Grand Terre Island in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana. There is infested cactus growing in and around the fort that needs to be removed. Louisiana State Parks, Office of Cultural Development, has jurisdiction over Fort Livingston. APHIS has consulted with Louisiana State Parks, and they are in support of our control efforts. An archeologist will be on site during cacti removal at Fort Livingston.

Lastly, because I have not found evidence of significant impact on the quality of the human environment associated with this program, I further find that an EIS does not need to be prepared and that this program may be implemented.

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1/7/10

Date