

**Decision and Finding of No Significant Impact  
for  
Field Release of *Megamelus scutellaris*, Berg (Hemiptera: Delphacidae), for Biological  
Control of Water Hyacinth *Eichhornia crassipes* Mart. (Solms) (Pontederiales:  
Pontederiaceae) in the Continental United States  
January 2010**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) Permit Unit, is proposing to issue permits for release of an insect, *Megamelus scutellaris*, Berg (Hemiptera: Delphacidae) in the continental United States. The agent would be used by the applicant for the biological control of water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes* Mart. (Solms)). Before permits are issued for release of *M. scutellaris*, APHIS must analyze the potential impacts of the release of this organism into the continental United States. APHIS has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) that analyzes the potential environmental consequences of this action. The EA is available from:

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Animal and Plant Health inspection Service  
Plant Protection and Quarantine  
Registrations, Identification, Permits, and Plant Safeguarding  
4700 River Road, Unit 133  
Riverdale, MD 20737  
[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant\\_health/ea/biocontrol\\_weeds.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/ea/biocontrol_weeds.shtml)

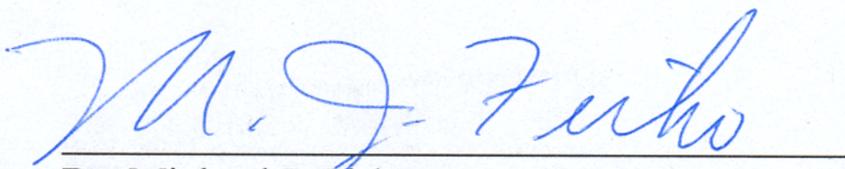
The EA analyzed the following two alternatives in response to a request for permits authorizing environmental release of *M. scutellaris*: (1) no action, and (2) issue permits for the release of *M. scutellaris* for biological control of water hyacinth. A third alternative, to issue permits with special provisions or requirements concerning release procedures or mitigating measures, was considered. However, this alternative was dismissed because no issues were raised that indicated that special provisions or requirements were necessary. The No Action alternative, as described in the EA, would likely result in the continued use at the current level of chemical, mechanical, and biological control methods for the management of water hyacinth. These control methods described are not alternatives for decisions to be made by APHIS, but are presently being used to control water hyacinth in the United States and may continue regardless of permit issuance for field release of *M. scutellaris*. Notice of the EA was made available in the Federal Register on November 16, 2009 for a 30-day public comment period. One comment was received on the EA. The final EA contains a written response to the comment received on the draft EA in appendix E.

I have decided to authorize the APHIS–PPQ Permit Unit to issue permits for the environmental release of *M. scutellaris*. The reasons for my decision are:

- This biological control agent is sufficiently host specific and poses little, if any, threat to the biological resources of the continental United States.

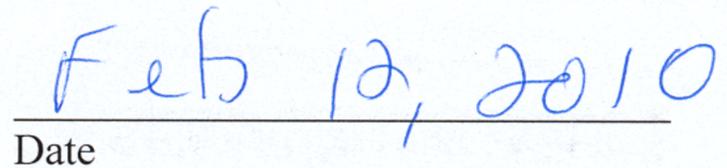
- The release will have no effect on federally listed threatened and endangered species or their habitats in the continental United States.
- *M. scutellaris* poses no threat to the health of humans or wild or domestic animals.
- No negative cumulative impacts are expected from release of *M. scutellaris*.
- There are no disproportionate adverse effects to minorities, low-income populations, or children in accordance with Executive Order 12898 "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-income Populations" and Executive Order 13045, "Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks."
- While there is not total assurance that the release of *M. scutellaris* into the environment will be reversible, there is no evidence that this organism will cause any adverse environmental effects.

An environmental impact statement (EIS) must be prepared if implementation of the proposed action may significantly affect the quality of the human environment. I have determined that there would be no significant impact to the human environment from the implementation of any of the action alternatives and, therefore, no EIS needs to be prepared.



Dr. Michael J. Firko  
Director

Registrations, Identification, Permits, and Plant Safeguarding  
APHIS Plant Health Programs  
Plant Protection and Quarantine



Date