Plant Protection & Quarantine
Deputy Administrator's Safeguarding Award

Background and Criteria

The PPQ Deputy Administrator's Safeguarding Award is given in recognition of initiatives and innovations that make significant contributions to furthering the goal of safeguarding American agriculture and plant resources. The Deputy will recognize nominations that (1) establish a new process, operation, procedure, or policy that contributes directly or indirectly to safeguarding or (2) significantly improves an existing process, operation, procedure, or policy that contributes directly or indirectly to safeguarding. The nomination should demonstrate initiative or innovation and show a definable result. Each nomination should contain information linking the action to a specific principle or recommendation in the Safeguarding Review, and it should address one of the four principle areas contained in the Safeguarding Review:

- permits to control the movement of pests
- the collection and use of information about pests throughout the world
- pest detection and response
- exclusion of pests (including offshore mitigation)

Submission of Nominations

Nominations should be submitted on the attached form to Paula Henstridge at 302-E J.L Whitten Building, 14th & Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20250. They may also be e-mailed to Paula.Henstridge@aphis.usda.gov or faxed to her at (202) 720-8535. Nominations may also be submitted through your State Plant Health Director. Please submit all nominations by the end of each quarter of the fiscal year (December 31, March 31, June 30, and September 30).

Please note that potential nominees are not limited to PPQ employees.

Selection of Award Recipient(s)

Nominations for the Deputy's Safeguarding Award will be reviewed by the Safeguarding Steering Committee, which will forward its ranking to the Deputy for final consideration. The individual or group selected for recognition will receive a trophy and a small medal. The winner's name and achievement will also be inscribed on a plaque to be displayed in the Deputy Administrator's Office as the Deputy's "wall of fame." Achievements will also be noted on the Safeguarding website and through other appropriate mechanisms.

PPQ Deputy's Safeguarding Award
Submission Form

1. Name, Address, Job Title, and Phone Number of Nominee (if a group is being submitted, provide the contact information for the group leader and the names and affiliation of all members of the group)

- Paul Hornby, Asst. SPHD – Florida, USDA-APHIS-PPQ, 7022 N.W. 10th Place, Gainesville, FL 32605, 352-331-3990. (**Group Leader**)
- Richard Gaskalla, Director, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry
- Dr. Wayne Dixon, Chief, Bureau of Entomology, Nematology, and Plant Pathology, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry
- Dr. Greg Hodges, Biological Scientist, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry
- Dr. Susan Halbert, Biological Scientist, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry
- Dr. Richard Weaver Jr., Biological Scientist, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry
- Yen Dao, Lab Technician, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry
- Eduardo Varona, State Operations Support Officer, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
- Ramon Montalvo, SITC Officer, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
- William Tang, Entomologist, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
- Linda Criner, Plant Health Safeguarding Specialist, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
- Gordon Muraoka, Area Director, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
- Lou Volpe, SITC Supervisor, USDA-APHIS-PPQ

2. Describe the action that enhanced safeguarding.

On August 24, 2005 a survey team comprised of State and Federal personnel were conducting a CAPS Hot Zone survey targeting high risk farms in South Florida that grow exotic fruits and vegetables. This initiative was organized by the State / Federal CAPS Team and included State and Federal taxonomic specialists, local Port of Miami personnel and a representative from the South Florida SITC work unit. The SITC Officer serves in a liaison capacity with the South Florida tropical fruit growers and identified and facilitated access to the various farms that were scheduled to be surveyed. Surveys at the first farm visited in Homestead revealed pummelo trees exhibiting classic symptoms of Huanglongbing (HLB) on both leaves and fruit. Samples were subsequently submitted to both State and Federal labs and later confirmed positive for HLB.

3. How did the action enhance safeguarding?

The action resulted in the first detection of HLB in the continental United States. HLB is one of the most serious citrus diseases in the world. It is the major limiting factor for citrus production in parts of Asia, Africa and South America. In areas where the disease in endemic, citrus trees

may live for 5-8 years and never produce usable fruit. Following this detection a formal ICS Unified (State / Federal) Command was established to further delimit the presence of the disease in South Florida. Through the ICS a streamlined communication protocol was established with key State / Federal Regional and National personnel, industry leaders, and the National Plant Board to manage and disseminate program information with respect to surveillance strategies, diagnostic protocols, and regulatory response. This enhanced communication network helped other citrus producing states begin to formalize their respective response strategies in advance of the disease.

4. How does it demonstrate innovation or initiative?

Although the term "Hot Zone" didn't exist at the time of the Safeguarding review, the foundational concept was recognized (see #6). The action described above was a direct and practical application of this concept to a real life field setting which resulted in the detection of an extremely significant exotic citrus disease. In a time when many exotic pests are found by the industry, homeowners, county agents, or crop consultants it was reassuring to see that the utilization of this concept delivered such a valuable discovery by State and Federal regulatory personnel. The cooperative nature of this survey initiative should also be emphasized. Florida State and Federal regulatory personnel routinely work together in a variety of safeguarding initiatives and this particular instance reiterates the value of this cooperative relationship in leveraging available regulatory and technical expertise.

5. Which of the four areas of the Safeguarding Review does the activity support?

Pest Detection & Response.

6. What recommendation or safeguarding principle does the action support?

The action primarily supported 3.3.1 Invasive Plant Pest Detection Activities – Findings: (3) The efficiency of active surveillance is enhanced by targeting high risk sentinel areas; Recommendation D-25, Identify potential invasive plant pests and corresponding sentinel areas at high risk for their entry.

As a result of the detection of HLB a collateral recommendation was also achieved. This involved 3.1.2 Organization of Invasive Plant Pest Response Activities – Findings: (1) APHIS-PPQ does not have a well coordinated invasive plant pest response plan to involve State and Federal plant regulatory agencies and industry stakeholders, (3) APHIS-PPQ emergency response activities are often delayed due to limited authority for implementation, procurement, and personnel decisions; Recommendation D-10, Identify USDA organizational and procedural deficiencies which hinder rapid response to invasive plant pest detection. Develop and implement procedural enhancements to expedite the most efficient and effective emergency response mechanisms. Empower personnel for immediate response in all program areas, including procurement of essential resources.

7. Provide any information that demonstrates the outcome/success of the activity.

Florida has long been recognized as a sentinel state at high risk for the introduction of exotic plant pests and diseases given the volume of international tourists, perishable cargo, mail deliveries, and smuggling operations. These threats combined with a favorable climate pose an ever present danger to our diverse agricultural and natural resources. The scope and complexity of potential pathways and subsequent areas of introduction for exotic plant pests and diseases requires innovative survey and response strategies given limited State and Federal resources. The application of this Hot Zone targeted survey and resulting early detection of HLB has allowed the State and Federal regulatory community to gain a head start in dealing with this significant citrus disease with other local cooperators including USDA-ARS, the University of Florida, and the citrus industry. Additionally, a successful outcome of this initiative was the immediate dissemination of key program information to other citrus producing states which has allowed them to learn more about this disease and develop their own survey and response strategies.