

## **PPQ Deputy Administrator's Promising Practices Award Submission Form**

**Name, Address, Job Title and organization, and Phone Number of Nominee**

**This nomination is for:** The Port of El Paso, Texas

**Pathway:** Southern Land – Border

**Port:** El Paso, Texas, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, DHS

**Port Director:** David Longoria

**Chief of Agriculture Operations:** William Coppenbarger,

**Supervisor for Agriculture Inspections Training:** Frank G. Cordova

**Director Of Field Operations:** Luis Garcia

**Nomination respectfully submitted by:** Bernardo (Bernie) Olivas, Program Manager-Agriculture Programs, El Paso Field Office, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (915) 633-7300 X 374

### **Brief Narrative of the Promising Practice (Best Practice)**

The Agriculture Import Inspection Operations merged into U. S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) March 01, 2003. The need to train CBP Agriculture Specialists (CBPAS') on Pest Identification and types of intercepted host material that are commonly seized or regulated was identified. To meet this need, the El Paso Port CBP Agriculture Inspections Training branch met with El Paso's USDA, Plant Protection Quarantine (PPQ) Officer in Charge and Area Pest Identifiers to develop and implement training for CBPAS' and CBP Officers (CBPOs).

The outcome of these meetings was the development of the following training plans:

- New CBPAS' received training that was comprised of a ½ day orientation that is done pre-academy and 4 days of laboratory/identification training with USDA's Area Insect and Disease Identifiers that is completed post-academy after the CBPAS returns from Frederick, MD.
- Experienced CBPAS' and CBPAS Managers receive a 1-day Refresher Training course with the Identifiers.
- CBPOs as part of their Agriculture Procedures - Southern Border training undergo an overview of Agriculture Inspection Programs that include:
  - Agriculture risk management – referral of vehicles from high agriculture risk areas and Compliance Exam (COMPEX) referrals for AQI Monitoring
  - NII (x-ray) of international baggage for agriculture purposes
  - Primary and Secondary vehicle inspections for agriculture

- Examination of Quarantine Material Interceptions for pests or diseases
- Agriculture Cargo examinations
- Review of pest and disease identification process with the El Paso USDA Officer in Charge and Area Identifiers

The goal of this training was to train all CBP Agriculture Specialists on significant (reportable or actionable) plant pests or diseases and Quarantine Materials that are approaching and commonly intercepted at El Paso Field Office Ports of Entry via the Southern Land-border and to increase awareness of Agriculture Inspection Programs for CBPOs.

This joint training plan was implemented in fiscal year 2005.

- FY 05 - 34 CBP Agriculture Specialists were trained on Pest Identification. This goal was met with 100% of the CBP Agriculture Specialists having received the training.
- FY 06 - 42 Agriculture Specialists were scheduled to receive the new or refresher training. To date, more than 90% have been trained and plans are on track to again achieve 100% of the goal.
- FY 06 – Approximately 191 (25%) of the CBPOs in El Paso have been trained and received the Agriculture Inspections Program overview and USDA review.

**Timeline: Was this promising practice recent?**

Yes, this training is and has been on-going for almost two fiscal years.

**Considerations: Promising Practices**

- *Is this promising practice a new idea, or an ongoing activity?* This promising practice is a new idea that has led to ongoing training and additional planned/programmed training. .
- *Can it be uniquely applied?* Yes; however, it can also be applied at any CBP Agriculture staffed ports that are supported by USDA's Identifiers
- *Is there an identifiable outcome?* Yes, CBPAS' that have been trained in this Pest Identification can more readily identify commonly intercepted pests that are of quarantine significance. The CBPAS is taught to focus on pests of agricultural significance and commonly intercepted Quarantine Material (QMIs) that are more prone to infestation. (Refer to attachment 1 for comments by DATER Group and El Paso Field Office Response.)
- *Does it meet operational and strategic goals of program?* Yes, CBP's mission to prevent terrorists and instruments of terror from entering the U.S. also includes the Agriculture mission of Protecting American Agriculture by preventing the introduction of significant (exotic) plant pests, plant diseases, and noxious weed seeds into the U. S.

- *Is it aligned with agency policy and procedures?* This training is aligned with agency policy and procedures and follows the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between DHS and USDA covered under Article 4. Under Article 4 of the MOA, Section III, A. 3, it says, USDA APHIS shall have the responsibility to supervise the training of DHS CBP employees to carry out the functions transferred under the Act.
- *Does it improve effectiveness or efficiency?* Yes. El Paso CBPAS' have improved both their effectiveness and efficiency by focusing on locally intercepted or approaching agriculture pests and diseases. Every year through feedback from both the PPQ National Identification Service (NIS), the Pest Identification Network (PIN), and through collaboration and feedback from the PPQ Identifiers, the training for the CBPAS on Pest Identification is continually improved.

In FY 2006, additional training focusing on the processing of QMIs targeting pests of quarantine significance has ensured a more efficient processing of quarantine materials.

The "Pest Of the Month" recognition award was implemented to reward Agriculture Specialists for intercepting pests of high agricultural significance.

USDA's Identifiers provide CBP Agriculture Specialists with an easily accessible reference library of compressed digital images of both host material and pests

- *Does this practice encompass any of the 4 elements of the safeguarding review?* Yes, Elements 3: Pest Detection and Response and Element 4: Exclusion

### **Impact: Promising Practices**

- Could this practice be applicable elsewhere? Yes
- *Could this practice be adopted regionally and nationally?* Yes, this practice could be adopted nationally with modifications to target significant and like pests in like regional areas. For example, the Agriculture training modules that have been developed for the Southern and Northern Borders as well as the Air and Maritime Environments.

The concept of providing local/regional training for new and experienced CBP Agriculture Specialist should be adopted. CBP and USDA Headquarters and/or the Field Offices need to budget for travel for the CBPAS' or the USDA Identifiers to provide training to ports within their area of responsibility.

- *With lessons learned, is a broader application possible?* Yes, the same type of training could be used for nationally mandated pest identification programs. On 02/21/2006 a Joint Agreement was developed between CBP and PPQ on Plant Pest and Pathogen Detection. This national agreement is designed to enhance the proficiency of plant pest interceptions by CBP Agriculture Specialists through a series of structured

pest detection efforts. This type of training could be easily dropped into the training infrastructure already in place.

**Mission: How did this promising practice relate to the mission?**

Along with CBP's mission, CBP Agriculture Specialists and CBP Officers must also Protect American Agriculture by detecting and preventing the introduction of significant (exotic) plant pests, plant diseases, and noxious weed seeds from being imported into the United States. However, the difference between this training program and other National Training programs is that this Joint CBP and USDA Pest and Pathogen Detection training program is tailored for locally intercepted pests that are of significant agricultural interest. These are the significant pests that are going to be intercepted over 95% of the time.

These training plans are going to be a lead into the Identification Discard Authority training that will be offered by USDA.