



Animal and Plant
Health Inspection
Service

Office of the
Administrator

1400 Independence
Avenue SW
Washington, DC
20250

April 7, 2014

Dear Stakeholders:

Earlier this year when I named Mike Gregoire as one of my Associate Administrators, it created a vacancy within our Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS) program. As many of you are aware, Mike led that program for 6 years ensuring the safe development and introduction of genetically engineered organisms while also overseeing improvements to our biotechnology regulatory process. To continue this critical work, I have asked Dr. Mike Firko—who has been acting in this role since Mike Gregoire joined me in the Administrator's office—to become BRS' next Deputy Administrator. And, I have asked Janet Bucknall, who most recently served as the Deputy Director of Wildlife Operations for our Wildlife Services (WS) program, to join Mike as his Associate Deputy Administrator.

Together Mike and Janet will maintain BRS' focus on rigorous, science-based regulatory policy, continue to improve the timeliness of regulatory decisions for petitions of non-regulated status, and ensure the process is fully transparent and provides multiple opportunities for public comment.

Mike's USDA career spans more than 26 years, most of which he spent at APHIS, along with several years at the Agricultural Research Service. In fact, Mike first joined APHIS to work for Biotechnology, Biologics and Environmental Protection—the predecessor to BRS. The majority of Mike's APHIS career, however, has been with our Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program where he served in a number of leadership positions. As APHIS' Executive Sponsor for ePermits, Mike led the Agency's transition to an on-line, electronic permitting system. He also led the creation of PPQ's Remote Pest ID system, which uses digital images to help identify intercepted pests and expedite cargo clearance. In addition, Mike led PPQ's Plant Pest Molecular Diagnostics Laboratory, the National Plant Pest Identification Services, and the Plant Germplasm Quarantine program. Following the terrorists attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, Mike helped create and subsequently lead the Federal Select Agent Program until his move to BRS in 2011.

Mike joined BRS as the Acting Associate Deputy Administrator in July 2011, and was officially named to that position in March 2012. A little more than a year later, in May 2013, he was asked to serve as BRS' Acting Deputy Administrator. In addition to his BRS responsibilities, Mike currently serves on USDA's Science Council as the Marketing and Regulatory Programs mission area representative facilitating and supporting cross-Department coordination and collaboration of science-related activities.

Janet joined APHIS in 1987 working as a wildlife biologist in Wisconsin and then New York before becoming WS' New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York City State Director. She served in this position for 16 years engaging with communities, wildlife and agricultural agencies, airports and businesses to address wildlife-related problems. She also fostered partnerships with the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to refine and streamline WS' efforts to rescue birds affected by oil spills and protect endangered shorebirds from abundant wildlife populations.

In 2007, Janet moved to APHIS headquarters in Riverdale, MD, and became the Deputy Director for Wildlife Operations providing leadership and coordination on pesticide use and reporting as well as migratory bird and threatened and endangered species activities. In 2013, Janet spent four months as Acting Deputy Director for Employee and Management Services in APHIS' Marketing and Regulatory Programs Business Services Human Resources Division. In this role, she led a team of professionals providing support in the areas of employee and labor relations, administrative investigations, hearings and appeals, reasonable accommodations and work-life wellness. She also led the reorganization of two employee relations branches to streamline functions and support. In addition, Janet recently served on Agency committees charged with strategic planning and identifying non-regulatory solutions to carryout APHIS' mission more effectively.

We are fortunate to have a diverse pool of talented leaders here at APHIS, and I look forward to working closely with Mike and Janet in their new roles. Both bring a wealth of diverse experiences and skills that will greatly benefit their efforts to lead BRS and serve stakeholders. Please join me in welcoming Mike and Janet to their positions, and if you haven't worked with them previously, I encourage you to reach out and get to know them. They'll be working to do the same with you.

Sincerely,



Kevin Shea
APHIS Administrator