

 **NEWS RELEASE**

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
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USDA TO HOST PUBLIC MEETING ON LACEY ACT DECLARATION REQUIREMENT

WASHINGTON, Oct. 7, 2008 -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will host a public meeting on Oct. 14 to discuss the new declaration requirement established by recent revisions to the Lacey Act. The meeting will be held in the Jefferson Auditorium at USDA's South Agriculture Building, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W., from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

APHIS will provide stakeholders and the public with information about the declaration requirement and the proposed phase-in plan for its enforcement, along with the scope of the requirements and other related issues. Attendees also will have an opportunity to ask questions of officials from APHIS and the other federal agencies involved in the implementation of the declaration requirement.

On May 22, 2008, the Lacey Act was amended to make it illegal to import, export, transport, sell, receive, acquire or purchase in interstate or foreign commerce, any plant--with limited exceptions--to be taken or traded in violation of domestic or international laws. The amended Act now covers a broad range of plants and plant products, including timber deriving from illegally harvested plants. Illegal logging robs countries, destroys forests and competes with legal production and trade. This Act provides the federal government with the legal authority to take action when products stemming from the practice of illegal logging enter the United States.

Participants must enter the South building through the 7th Wing entrance located at Independence Ave. and 14th Street. Valid photo identification is required for clearance by building security personnel. Participants are encouraged to arrive 30 minutes prior to the start of the meeting to facilitate access to the auditorium.

Additional meetings will be held this winter near key port locations throughout the United States. Information on these meetings will be announced when details are finalized.

APHIS also will publish a notice in the Oct. 8 *Federal Register* that will provide details on the declaration requirement and the plans to phase-in enforcement. This information will be provided at the Oct. 14 public meeting as well.

Consideration will be given to comments received on or before Dec. 8. Send an original and two copies of postal mail or commercial delivery comments to Docket No. APHIS-2008-0119, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road,

Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Comments can be submitted on the Federal eRulemaking portal at <http://www.regulations.gov/fdmspublic/component/main?main=DocketDetail&d=APHIS-2008-0119>. Click on “Add Comments” to view public comments and related materials available electronically.

Comments are posted on the Regulations.gov Web site and also can be reviewed at USDA, Room 1141, South Building, 14th St. and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. To facilitate entry into the comment reading room, please call (202) 690-2817.

For more information on the declaration requirement, go to the APHIS Web site at www.aphis.usda.gov. Under, “Hot Issues” click on the link for “Lacey Act.”

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