

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, 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. Cal Welbourn, Biological Scientist, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry
- Dr. Mike Meadows, Plant Pest Survey Coordinator, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry
- Bill Thomas, QPAS Director, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
- Calvin Schuler , Senior Regional Program Manager, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
- Joel Floyd, Emergency Planning, Team Leader Emergency and Domestic Programs, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
- Ann E Wildman, Assistant SPHD- Florida, USDA-APHIS-PPQ_
- Eduardo M.Varona, State Operations Support Officer, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
- Bob Balaam, Offshore Initiatives Coordinator, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
- Amy Roda, Entomologist, USDA-APHIS-PPQ-CPHST
- Karolynne Griffiths, Pest Survey Specialist, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
- William C James, Area Director, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
- Gordon Muraoka, Supervisor, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
- William Tang, Entomologist, USDA-APHIS-PPQ
- Claude Knighten, Public Affairs Specialist, USDA-APHIS-PPQ-LPA
- Mike Wright, Assistant Director Field Operations, Miami Field Office, DHS-CBP
- Jerry Russo, Assistant Port Director, Trade Operations, Miami Seaport, DHS-CBP
- Lynette Cobb, Supervisory Agriculture Specialist, Miami Seaport, DHS-CBP
- Michael Crye, Executive Vice President, Cruise Lines International Association, Inc.
- Stanford W. Deno, Director of Operations, Cruise Lines International Association, Inc.
- Ted Thompson, Senior Vice President Technical and Regulatory Affairs, Cruise Lines International Association, Inc.
- Katherine Shore, Marketing Manager, Seatrade Cruise Shipping Convention, CMP Princeton Inc.
- Richard Pruitt, Director Environmental & Public Health Programs, Safety & Environment Department, Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd.

2. Describe the action that enhanced safeguarding.

From February through June 2007 a multi-agency team comprised of USDA, State of Florida Division of Plant Industry (DPI), and CBP personnel addressed one of the suspected pathways for Red Palm Mite (RPM) to invade the SE United States. The red palm mite (*Raoiella indica*, Tenuipalpidae), a pest of coconuts and ornamental palms in Asia and Africa arrived in the Caribbean in 2004. By 2007, the pest had spread to at least eleven islands, including Puerto Rico. Red palm mite populations are extremely high and the mite is attacking new hosts such as bananas, ginger and heliconias. Currently, there are no known mitigation efforts for the pest. If found in the continental U.S. red palm mite could severely impact the ornamental landscaping trade and threaten U.S. natural resources. A consortium of personnel in the South Florida area from PPQ, CPHST, Caribbean Safeguarding Initiative (CSI), CAPS, and CBP maritime port focused on reducing the threat by determining if palm handicrafts purchased by cruise ship passengers on infested Caribbean islands were a potential pathway for the red palm mite to enter into South Florida ports.

Efforts to address this potential pathway began on February 22, 2007 with discussions at a Biological Threat Advisory Group (BTAG) meeting in which USDA and CBP personnel identified the need to contact cruise lines to alert them of this suspected pathway and examine effective mitigation measures. The need to verify that palm handicrafts were a pathway for live RPM was also identified resulting in USDA personnel in Miami-Dade County recommending that local CBP begin a voluntary inspection of cruise ship passengers entering the Port of Miami from known infested Caribbean islands. As a result of this recommendation Miami maritime CBP conducted Operation "Code Red" from March 31 to April 22, 2007 which yielded five interceptions of live RPM thereby confirming the pathway for this invasive pest. Additionally, four reportable pests were also recovered from palm handicrafts.

In addition, a meeting was organized in Miami on March 3, 2007, comprised of local cruise line representatives, Southeast Florida USDA representatives, and CBP management, to inform the cruise lines of the threat that transporting RPM infested material posed on Southeast Florida as well as other areas of the United States, and to engage their assistance for further outreach. Cruise line representatives were open to help reduce the risk of this pathway and alerted Southeast Florida USDA personnel of an opportunity to address the Cruise Lines International Association, Inc. (CLIA) Technical Committee at an international convention to be held in Miami later in the month. On March 15, 2007, USDA and DPI personnel attended the cruise line convention in Miami and provided a red palm mite presentation to the CLIA Technical Committee as well as outreach material to tourism representatives at booths from islands in the Caribbean basin. The interaction with CLIA Technical Committee members resulted in the group of USDA and DPI personnel identifying the critical need to provide the cruise lines with an electronic media package containing the basic information of the pest and the risk to U.S. agriculture and natural resources that each cruise line could adapt to their individual media outreach efforts targeted to passengers. Four Southeast Florida USDA personnel and one DPI employee immediately began to work with LPA to craft this media package which was successfully released to the cruise line industry in May 2007.

These efforts to raise awareness in the cruise line industry and verify palm handicrafts as a RPM pathway ultimately yielded results within our own agency when a change in regulations on non commercial palm handicrafts occurred in June 2007. As a result of these regulation changes, South Florida USDA personnel again resumed work with LPA to revise the electronic media package for cruise lines in order to reflect the newly adapted regulations on palm handicrafts. The revised package was distributed to the industry on July 23, 2007.

3. How did the action enhance safeguarding?

The action resulted in the closure of this pathway by 1) informing CBP of the new threat and engaging their assistance in working together to meet the challenges; 2) verifying the significance of the pathway with quantifiable interceptions; 3) mitigating the pathway through a proactive and innovative outreach effort to reach as many as possible in the intended audience of cruise ship passengers; and 4) supporting a change in regulations to further impact the closure of this pathway.

4. How does it demonstrate innovation or initiative?

The action described above is an example of a cooperative approach in which together the USDA, DPI and CBP took the initiative through establishing appropriate contacts, the sharing of information, as well as results of field work in order to impact the exclusion of a serious pest at our borders. The outreach with the cruise line industry and the ultimate production and distribution of the electronic media package allowed for a wide scale distribution of information on invasive pests and simple preventative measures that the general public can take to help reduce the risk of RPM invading the U.S. The measures taken serve as a prime example of a successful effort between multiple branches within the USDA that brought together the media skills of LPA with the technical skills of science and regulatory personnel in order to yield a practical product for distribution to an important stakeholder. The efforts by all involved helped elevate awareness of the risk of the transportation of invasive pests on palm handicrafts in such a way as to impact a change in regulations to further close the pathway. The cooperative nature of this outreach should be emphasized. In Southeast Florida, USDA and CBP routinely work together in a variety of safeguarding initiatives and this outreach effort exemplifies the value of this cooperative relationship in successfully leveraging available regulatory and technical expertise to meet a mutual goal.

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

Pest Exclusion & Pest Detection and Response

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

- Overarching Issues - Public Information and Education 1.9, recommendations 48; Increase public information programs that focus on pest exclusion efforts such as "Don't pack a Pest". Accomplish this by providing leadership in collaboration with state and industry organizations throughout the nation. The action taken resulted in direct contact with the

cruise ship industry whereby LPA authorized information was supplied for their on-board media systems.

- Traveling Public 2.18 - Public Education and Awareness, recommendation E-71; Develop and foster close and effective working relationships with Federal inspection service agencies. The formation of DHS-CBP obviously occurred after the safeguarding review however this recommendation is still valid, especially in light of CBP's responsibilities in carrying out the agricultural mission in the ports of entry.
- Private Air and Cruise Ships 2.22, recommendation E-81, Conduct a specific pest pathway risk analysis to determine the invasive plant pest entry and establishment risk posed by private airplanes and cruise ships and revise its monitoring levels accordingly. Although this recommendation is broad in nature, the specific action taken was very much aligned with the intent of the recommendation, simply on a smaller scale in response to an emerging pest threat.
- Invasive Plant Pest Detection Activities 3.3.1, recommendation D-25; Identify potential invasive plant pests and corresponding sentinel areas at high risk for their entry. The action taken has led to a comprehensive sentinel site survey initiative through Florida's State /Federal CAPS program in concert with Florida's Cooperative Fruit Fly Detection Program.

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

There were several successful outcomes from this initiative. The potential for RPM introductions on palm handicrafts was proven without a doubt as a significant risk through live interceptions of this pest of economic significance and other pests on palm handicrafts. This led to a change in regulations by the USDA which now prohibits non commercial palm handicrafts and other palm related commodities. In addition to mitigating the pathway outright, this change in regulations also enables CBP to better align their resources for a more effective allocation of efforts in the inspection of palm handicrafts to prevent RPM introduction via this route. Additionally, CBP implemented the inspection expertise gained in Miami during Operation "Code Red" to extend the effort to a nationwide Operation "Red Mighty Mite" which led to an additional seven RPM and five reportable pest interceptions. Also, there is anecdotal evidence from Miami CBP that cruise lines were actively informing passengers of the risk of RPM introduction even before the release of the media package, and that this initiative impacted the amount of palm handicrafts intercepted. Lastly, the contacts made by USDA representatives with the cruise lines through CLIA will continue to mitigate the RPM pathway as cruise lines disseminate the information in the media package that was expressly produced for them to inform their passengers of the pest risk and the new prohibitions.

Attached are supporting documents which include the media package distributed to CLIA and an example of a letter to a foreign government informing them of the change in regulations.

