NCC Meeting Justification – January 28-29, 2014 – Gainesville, FL

The Pest Detection Program supports APHIS’ goal of safeguarding U.S. agricultural and environmental resources by ensuring that new introductions of harmful plant pests and diseases are detected as soon as possible, before they have a chance to cause significant damage. The program uses a multi-pronged strategy to accomplish its mission, involving a structured, transparent assessment process to identify pest threats, the development of scientifically sound pest diagnostics and survey protocols, conducting the actual pest surveys, and the timely reporting of pest survey results through the National Agricultural Pest Information System (NAPIS). These efforts are accomplished by involving stakeholders and the scientific community, and leveraging efforts by other Agencies in USDA, government entities, State departments of agriculture, universities, and industry partners. The Agency and its State cooperators carry out surveys for high-risk pests through the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) Program. The Pest Detection Program also leverages funding through the Farm Bill Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program, Goal1 Survey, to accomplish its goals.

The mission of the Pest Detection/CAPS program is to provide a survey profile of plant pests in the United States deemed to be of regulatory significance to USDA-APHIS-PPQ, State Departments of Agriculture, tribal governments, and cooperators by confirming the presence or absence of plant pests impacting the domestic and international movement of plants and plant products; and establishing and maintaining a comprehensive network of cooperators and stakeholders to facilitate our mission and to safeguard our American plant resources.

The National Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) Committee (NCC) meets annually to discuss the performance of the Pest Detection/CAPS program, and to discuss and update the CAPS National Survey Guidelines. The NCC also will discuss the implementation of any changes that may be needed to the Program and Guidelines based on issues raised during the previous survey year as a result of discussions with the various representatives’ constituency. A major portion of the meeting will focus on the initiation of a strategic plan and the discussion of what will the Program look like in 2020. This focus also is scattered throughout the agenda. The NCC also will need to address a wide variety of other Program-related issues, including further development of program management tools, such as the Survey Summary Form and CAPS Accountability Report, to be compatible with new data entry fields and pest naming conventions in NAPIS, tracking surveys and projects funded by Pest Detection, and the use of volunteers in surveys and outreach activities, among others (agenda attached).

As the Farm Bill Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program matures, it is time that discussions among the Pest Detection and Farm Bill Management Teams occur with stakeholder and cooperator input. The resolution on how these two Programs interact and leverage each other to complete their missions, especially regarding early detection surveys under Goal 1 of the Farm Bill Implementation Plan, is important to the well-being of both Programs moving forward. These discussions will inform the development of the Pest Detection strategic plan. Thus, it is vitally important that the Farm Bill Management Team attend the NCC meeting to discuss these issues and obtain stakeholder and cooperator perspective on the management of these Programs.

The annual meeting provides a forum to obtain input on the direction of the CAPS Program from those in the field, is an avenue to inform the States of new initiatives and survey and data guidelines, and is a means to alert our state cooperators of any plant pest threats and PPQ policy direction that may be on the horizon. The annual meeting also provides a forum for discussions among PPQ and State personnel and the Farm Bill Program that may well lead to major changes in the CAPS and Farm Bill Program’s business models. The results of this meeting will have important and wide implications. This meeting will develop recommendations, prioritize, and institute action items with milestones and deadlines. Discussion of these items will begin before the meeting, and relevant material distributed in advance, but a 2-full-day, face-to-face meeting with discussion is needed to prioritize, assign responsibilities, and continue to move the CAPS and Farm Bill Programs forward. A draft agenda is attached. The meeting will be held at a state cooperator facility. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry, in Gainesville, Florida, has graciously offered to host the meeting at no charge to APHIS for meeting space. Meeting dates are January 28 – 29, 2014, with travel on January 27 and 31, 2014. There will be 20 attendees, 12 of which are APHIS employees. Additionally, the National Policy Manager and National Operations Manager for Pest Detection will stay an extra day to meet with the Florida State CAPS Committee to discuss the CAPS Program and its implementation in Florida. The total estimated travel cost for the APHIS attendees is $14,176.