



Animal and Plant  
Health Inspection  
Service

Plant Protection and  
Quarantine

Plant Health  
Programs

Pest Detection &  
Emergency  
Programs

4700 River Road  
Riverdale, MD  
20737

**DATE:** December 7, 2016

**FROM:** John H. Bowers, PhD  
National Survey Coordinator  
National Policy Manager -  
Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "JHB", is placed over the name and title of the sender.

**SUBJECT:** Justification for the NCC Meeting in McAllen, Texas

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, which is funded through the Pest Detection line item. The Pest Detection Program also leverages funding through the Farm Bill Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program, Goal 1 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 and our 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), consisting of both APHIS and State representatives, meets annually to review and 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 proposed consolidation of early pest detection activities currently managed by three different processes (CAPS, Farm Bill, and internally funded surveys) into a single unified National Pest Surveillance Program. If the proposed changes are accepted by the PPQ MT, then significant changes in CAPS and Farm Bill processes and procedures will need to occur. Discussion will need to occur to determine the most efficient and effective processes and logistics that will work for both PPQ and state cooperators. Regardless, the similarities among CAPS, Farm Bill, and internally-funded surveys exist and discussion with state partners and the Farm Bill Management Team at this meeting will help to implement efficiencies across all three pest surveillance avenues. Thus, it is vitally important that all on the NCC attend the meeting to discuss these issues and obtain stakeholder and cooperator perspective on the management of these Programs. They will be needed for successful outcomes of the discussions noted above.

The second major part of this meeting will be to discuss the National CAPS Meeting. These discussions will include the approval process, justification for the meeting, goals and outcomes from the meeting, and an agenda that supports the goals, outcomes, and needs of the CAPS community. The goal is to conduct the meeting in November 2017.

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 developing real-time reporting of program performance measures for CAPS, PPQ, and Farm Bill Goal 1 Surveys.

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, the Farm Bill Program, and NIS 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. A 2 ½-day, face-to-face meeting with discussion is needed to prioritize, assign responsibilities, and continue to move the CAPS and Farm Bill Programs forward.

The meeting will be held at the PPQ offices in the Kika de la Garza Federal Building in McAllen, Texas. Meeting dates are February 7 – 9, 2017, with travel on February 6 and 10, 2017. There will be 24 attendees, 15 of which are APHIS employees and eight non-APHIS, state department of agriculture attendees. The non-APHIS attendees will be reimbursed through the PPQ-National Plant Board (NPB) Safeguarding Agreement as in past years. Additionally, a representative from Purdue University will attend the meeting.

The National CAPS Committee (NCC) consists of both state and federal personnel from different parts of the country working together to develop, improve, and guide the CAPS Program. When planning this annual meeting, we look for locations that highlight the safeguarding continuum in order to give the members a broader perspective. In past years we have held this meeting at the PPQ offices in Raleigh, the National Detector Dog Training Center in Newnan, GA, the Plant Inspection Station in Miami, the Texas SPHD office in Austin, the Florida DPI offices in Gainesville, the CDFA offices in Sacramento, and last year at the Arizona SPHD office in Phoenix. This meeting in McAllen, TX, will highlight the challenges of a border crossing and allow attendees to experience the operation and work flow of the PPQ Survey Supply Program warehouse, CPHST Lab, and Fruit Fly Sterile Insect Technique Program at nearby Moore Air Base.

If you need further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at [John.Bowers@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:John.Bowers@aphis.usda.gov).