



June 15, 2010

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and Plant
Health Inspection
Service


Plant Protection and
Quarantine

Emergency and
Domestic Programs

4700 River Road
Riverdale, MD
20737

Subject: USDA APHIS PPQ Moratorium for Biological Control of Saltcedar
(*Tamarix* species) using the biological control agent *Diorhabda* species
(Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae)

To: PPQ State Plant Health Directors
State and Territory Agricultural Regulatory Officials

From: Alan K. Dowdy, PhD 
Director of Invertebrate and Biological Control Programs

The saltcedar leaf beetle, *Diorhabda* species, (including all species, subspecies, or ecotypes in the *Diorhabda elongata* complex) was previously permitted for environmental release for the biological control of saltcedar (*Tamarix* spp. L.) in the United States by USDA APHIS.

Concerns about the potential effects to the critical habitat of the federally-listed, endangered southwestern willow flycatcher have resulted in the following actions by USDA APHIS:

1. The APHIS PPQ saltcedar biological control program in 13 states has been terminated. Survey and evaluation of PPQ program releases will continue to assess the impact on saltcedar density and reestablishment of native vegetation.
2. The PPQ Permit Unit has discontinued issuing new permits for field cage or greenhouse studies using the saltcedar leaf beetle outside of a containment facility.
3. The PPQ Permit Unit has discontinued issuing new permits for interstate movement and environmental release of *Diorhabda* spp.
4. The PPQ Permit Unit has cancelled all issued (i.e., active) permits for interstate movement and environmental release of *Diorhabda* spp.
5. PPQ will not authorize the release of *Diorhabda* spp. from containment or caged field study sites. However, the PPQ Permit Unit will authorize continuation of existing *Diorhabda* spp. activities in containment facilities.

In the event that endangered species issues are resolved, consultation between USDA APHIS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may be initiated to allow resumption of APHIS *Diorhabda* spp. permitting and biological control program activities. Until these concerns are alleviated and the program activities are officially reinitiated, any unauthorized human-assisted movement of *Diorhabda* spp., particularly into the critical habitat of the southwestern willow flycatcher, is not authorized by APHIS, and may constitute a violation of the Endangered Species Act which could result in criminal punishment and/or fines. Additionally, the unauthorized collection, interstate transportation, and release of *Diorhabda* spp. in the U.S. may constitute a criminal and/or civil violation of the Plant Protection Act, with criminal penalties and/or fines assessed up to \$250,000 per violation. APHIS does not permit unauthorized provision of *Diorhabda* spp. or access to them to parties who intend to move, transport and/or release the beetles. Should any questions arise on the interpretation of this memo please contact me or one of the individuals listed below.



Safeguarding American Agriculture

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(Voice/TTY/ASCII/Spanish)
1-800-877-8339

For additional information please contact Mr. Robert Tichenor (Robert.H.Tichenor@aphis.usda.gov) for permits of biological control agents; Dr. Tracy Horner (Tracy.A.Horner@aphis.usda.gov) for environmental compliance; and Dr. Jo-Ann Bentz-Blanco (Jo-Ann.Bentz-Blanco@aphis.usda.gov) for the PPQ National Biological Control Program.

For information on permits for regulated organisms please visit:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/permits/organism

For information on the PPQ Biological Control Program please visit:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/biocontrol