Q-37 plant import screening

Background

The USDA gained expanded power to halt imports of “pest plant” species under a new regulation announced in 2011. The regulation allows USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to restrict imports of risky plants not already widespread in the U.S. without doing an extensive risk assessment. The new regulation creates a precautionary category for plants called “not authorized pending pest risk analysis” (NAPPRA), under the APHIS regulation known as Quarantine 37 that applies to nursery plant imports.

NAEPPC support for NAPPRA

NAEPPC advocated for the creation of the NAPPRA pest plant listing category, and NAEPPC supports strong implementation of NAPPRA. NAPPRA is a proactive policy innovation that can reduce the threat invasive plants pose to America’s environment and economy. Preventing import of high-risk species using science-based risk assessment is a cost-effective approach for the nation. NAEPPC supports adequate funding resources for APHIS to implement NAPPRA promptly.

Recommendations

1. To work best, APHIS’s risk assessment process should be transparent and well-informed by outside experts and stakeholders and should be based on the best scientific methodology.

2. Key terms in the NAPPRA designation process should be more clearly defined. In particular, “official control” needs definition, especially in relationship to state EPPC invasive plant lists.

3. APHIS should consider plants listed under NAPPRA for the federal noxious weed list in order to protect the country from movement of the plant between states.