

ahead on (202) 690-2817 to facilitate entry into the comment reading room.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For information regarding regulations for the introduction of genetically engineered organisms and products which are plant pests or which there is reason to believe are plant pests, contact Arnold Foudin, Assistant Director, Scientific Services, PPQ, APHIS, 4700 River Road, Unit 146, Riverdale, MD 20737-1236, (301) 734-7612. For copies of more detailed information on the information collection, contact Gregg Ramsey, APHIS' Information Collection Coordinator, at (301) 734-5682.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Introduction of Organisms and Products Altered or Produced Through Genetic Engineering Which are Plant Pests or Which There is Reason to Believe are Plant Pests.

OMB Number: 0579-0085.

Expiration Date of Approval: September 30, 1998.

Type of Request: Extension of approval of an information collection.

Abstract: The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of the United States Department of Agriculture is responsible for, among other things, preventing the introduction or dissemination of plant pests into or through the United States. As part of that responsibility, APHIS regulates the introduction (importation, interstate movement, and release into the environment) of organisms and products altered or produced through genetic engineering that are plant pests or that there is reason to believe are plant pests.

In administering the regulations, APHIS collects certain information through its permitting and notification processes. That information is collected to enable APHIS to evaluate the plant pest risk posed by the introduction of certain genetically engineered organisms and products.

The information we seek with our notification and permit process includes, among other things, a complete description of the organism or product, the safeguards that will be used in preventing escape, the destination or field test locations, and field test results that describe any unusual or harmful occurrences.

Without the information we obtain through our notification and permit application process, we would be unable to evaluate the plant pest risk posed by the introduction of certain genetically engineered organisms and products.

We are asking the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to

approve the continued use of these information collection activities.

The purpose of this notice is to solicit comments from the public (as well as affected agencies) concerning this information collection activity. We need this outside input to help us:

(1) Evaluate whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Agency, including whether the information will have practical utility;

(2) Evaluate the accuracy of our estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;

(3) Enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and

(4) Minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, through use, as appropriate, of automated, electronic, mechanical, and other collection technologies, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses.

Estimate of burden: The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 0.8434 hours per response.

Respondents: U.S. importers and shippers of genetically engineered organisms and products; agricultural companies that develop or test genetically engineered organisms or products; and members of the publicly-funded research community.

Estimated annual number of respondents: 150.

Estimated annual number of responses per respondent: 33.

Estimated annual number of responses: 4,950.

Estimated total annual burden on respondents: 4,175 hours. (Due to rounding, the total annual burden hours may not equal the product of the annual number of responses multiplied by the average reporting burden per response.)

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Done in Washington, DC, this 11th day of March 1998.

Craig A. Reed,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 98-6922 Filed 3-17-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-34-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. 98-019-1]

Availability of Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that an environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact has been prepared by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service relative to the issuance of a permit to allow the field testing of genetically engineered organisms. The environmental assessment provides a basis for our conclusion that the field testing of the genetically engineered organisms will not present a risk of introducing or disseminating a plant pest and will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. Based on its finding of no significant impact, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has determined that an environmental impact statement need not be prepared.

ADDRESSES: A copy of the environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact is available for public inspection at USDA, room 1141, South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC, between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. Persons wishing to inspect the document are requested to call ahead on (202) 690-2817 to facilitate entry into the reading room.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Arnold Foudin, Assistant Director, Scientific Services, PPQ, APHIS, Suite 5B05, 4700 River Road, Unit 147, Riverdale, MD 20737-1237; (301) 734-7612. For a copy of the environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact, contact Ms. Linda Lightle at (301) 734-8231; e-mail: llightle@aphis.usda.gov. Please refer to the permit number listed below when ordering the document.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The regulations in 7 CFR part 340 (referred to below as the regulations) regulate the introduction (importation, interstate movement, and release into the environment) of genetically engineered organisms and products that are plant pests or that there is reason to believe are plant pests (regulated articles). A permit must be obtained or a

notification acknowledged before a regulated article may be introduced into the United States. The regulations set forth the permit application requirements and the notification procedures for the importation, interstate movement, and release into the environment of a regulated article.

In the course of reviewing the permit application, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) assessed the impact on the environment

that releasing the organisms under the conditions described in the permit application would have. APHIS has issued a permit for the field testing of the organisms listed below after concluding that the organisms will not present a risk of plant pest introduction or dissemination and will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. The environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact, which is based

on data submitted by the applicant and on a review of other relevant literature, provides the public with documentation of APHIS' review and analysis of the environmental impacts associated with conducting the field test.

An environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact has been prepared by APHIS relative to the issuance of a permit to allow the field testing of the following genetically engineered organisms:

Permit No.	Permittee	Date issued	Organisms	Field test location
97-301-01r	ProdiGene, Inc	1-30-98	Tomato plants genetically engineered to express a novel protein of pharmaceutical interest.	Texas.

The environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact has been prepared in accordance with: (1) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), (2) regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500-1508), (3) USDA regulations implementing NEPA (7 CFR part 1b), and (4) APHIS' NEPA Implementing Procedures (7 CFR part 372).

Done in Washington, DC, this 11th day of March 1998.

Craig A. Reed,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

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encouraged to attend. Members of the public who wish to make a brief oral presentation at the meeting should contact Larry Hartmann, BMNRI, 1401 Gekeler Lane, La Grande, Oregon 97850, 541-962-6537, no later than 5:00 p.m. April 17, 1998, to have time reserved on the agenda.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Direct questions regarding this meeting to Larry Hartmann, Manager, BMNRI, 1401 Gekeler Lane, La Grande, Oregon 97850, 541-962-6537.

Dated: March 10, 1998.

Lawrence A. Hartmann,

Manager.

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local organizations; will share information and ideas about Committee members' assignments; will continue discussions on the scientific principles underlying land and resource management; and will conduct any other Committee business that may arise. The meetings are open to the public and opportunities for the public to address the Committee will be provided.

DATES: The Boston meeting will be held March 31-April 1, 1998, and the Albuquerque meeting will be held April 14-15, 1998.

ADDRESSES: The Boston meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn Select, Government Center, 5 Blossom Street at Cambridge Street, Boston, Massachusetts. The Albuquerque meeting will be held at the Sheraton Hotel Old Town, 800 Rio Grande NW, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Written comments on improving land and resource management planning may be sent to the Committee of Scientists, P.O. Box 2140, Corvallis, OR 97339. Also, the Committee may be accessed via the Internet at www.cof.orst.edu/org/scicomm/.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Bob Cunningham, Designated Federal Official to the Committee of Scientists, telephone: 202-205-2494.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Boston meeting to discuss planning issues concerning the National Forests in the Eastern Region will begin at 9 a.m. and end at 7 p.m. on March 31. On April 1, the meeting will begin at 8 a.m. and end at 4 p.m. Citizens may address the Committee on March 31, beginning at 4 p.m., to present ideas on how to improve National Forest System land and resource management planning.

The Albuquerque meeting to discuss planning issues concerning the Southwestern Region will begin at 9

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Blue Mountains Natural Resources Institute, Board of Directors, Pacific Northwest Research Station, Oregon

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The Blue Mountains Natural Resources Institute (BMNRI) Board of Directors will meet on April 24, 1998, at Agriculture Service Center Conference Room, 10507 N. McAlister Road, La Grande, Oregon. The meeting will begin at 9 a.m. and continue until 3:30 p.m. Agenda items to be covered will include: (1) Program status; (2) research results of specific projects; (3) outreach activities; (4) report on Initiatives; (5) presentations by guest speakers; (6) forum for issues discussion; (7) public comments. All BMNRI Board Meetings are open to the public. Interested citizens are

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Committee of Scientists Meetings

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meetings.

SUMMARY: The Committee of Scientists is holding its next two meetings on March 31-April 1, 1998, in Boston, Massachusetts and on April 14-15, 1998, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The purpose of the Boston meeting is to discuss planning issues concerning the National Forests in the Eastern Region (Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin). The purpose of the Albuquerque meeting is to discuss planning issues concerning the Southwestern Region (New Mexico and Arizona). The Committee will meet with representatives from federal, state, and