

Decision and Finding of No Significant Impact
for
Field Release of the Insects *Calophya latiforceps* (Hemiptera: Calophyidae) and
***Pseudophilothrips ichini* (Thysanoptera: Phlaeothripidae) for Classical Biological Control**
of Brazilian Peppertree in the Contiguous United States
April 2019

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is proposing to issue permits for environmental release of two insects, *Calophya latiforceps* (Hemiptera: Calophyidae) and *Pseudophilothrips ichini* (Thysanoptera: Phlaeothripidae). These agents would be used for the biological control of Brazilian peppertree, *Schinus terebinthifolia* (Anacardiaceae), in the contiguous United States. Before permits are issued for release of *C. latiforceps* and *P. ichini*, APHIS must analyze the potential impacts of their release into the contiguous United States in accordance with USDA, APHIS National Environmental Policy Act implementing regulations (7 Code of Federal Regulations Part 372). APHIS has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) that analyzes the potential environmental consequences of this action. The EA is available from:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Plant Protection and Quarantine
Pests, Pathogens, and Biocontrol Permits
4700 River Road, Unit 133
Riverdale, MD 20737
http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/ea/index.shtml

The EA analyzed the following four alternatives in response to requests for permits authorizing environmental release of *C. latiforceps* and *P. ichini*: (1) no action, (2) issue permits for the environmental release of *Calophya latiforceps* for biological control of Brazilian peppertree, (3) issue permits for the environmental release of *Pseudophilothrips ichini* for biological control of Brazilian peppertree, and (4) issue permits for the environmental release of both *C. latiforceps* and *P. ichini* (preferred alternative). A fifth alternative, to issue permits with special provisions or requirements concerning release procedures or mitigating measures, was considered. However, this alternative was dismissed because no issues were raised that indicated that special provisions or requirements were necessary. The No Action alternative, as described in the EA, would likely result in the continued use at the current level of chemical, mechanical, physical, and biological controls for the management of Brazilian peppertree. These control methods described are not alternatives for decisions to be made by APHIS, but are presently being used to control Brazilian peppertree in the United States and may continue regardless of permit issuance for field release of *C. latiforceps* and *P. ichini*. Notice of this EA was made available in the Federal Register on February 27, 2019 for a 30-day public comment period. APHIS received a total of 129 comments on the EA by the close of the comment period. Most comments (120) were in favor of the release of the biological control organisms. Nine commenters were either not in favor of or raised concerns regarding the release of the two organisms. These issues are addressed in appendix 7 of the EA.

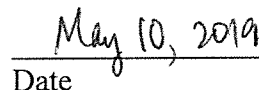
I have decided to authorize APHIS to issue permits for the environmental release of both *C. latiforceps* and *P. ichini*. The reasons for my decision are:

- *Calophya latiforceps* and *P. ichini* are sufficiently host specific and pose little, if any, threat to the biological resources, including non-target plant species, of the contiguous United States.
- *Calophya latiforceps* and *P. ichini* are not likely to adversely affect federally listed threatened and endangered species or their critical habitats in the contiguous United States.
- *Calophya latiforceps* and *P. ichini* pose no threat to the health of humans or animals.
- No negative cumulative impacts are expected from release of either *C. latiforceps* or *P. ichini*.
- There are no disproportionate adverse effects to minorities, low-income populations, or children in accordance with Executive Order 12898 "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-income Populations" and Executive Order 13045, "Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks."
- While there is not total assurance that the release of *C. latiforceps* and *P. ichini* into the environment will be reversible, there is no evidence that these organisms will cause any adverse environmental effects.

I have determined that there would be no significant impact to the human environment from the implementation of the preferred alternative and, therefore, no Environmental Impact Statement needs to be prepared.



Steven Crook, Director
Permitting and Coordination Compliance
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Plant Protection and Quarantine



Date