



The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station

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*Putting Science to Work for Society
Protecting Agriculture, Public Health, and the Environment*

Founded 1875

Environment Committee Public Hearing Testimony
House Bills 5309, 5310, and 5311
January 30, 2013

Good morning Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, ranking members Senator Chapin and Representative Shaban, and other members of the Environment Committee. My name is Kirby C. Stafford, III. I am the Vice Director of The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station and State Entomologist. I thank you for giving me this opportunity to present testimony in support of Committee Bills 5309, 5310, and 5311. These bills propose language changes to CT General Statutes 22-81(c) and 22-84 for the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. In all cases, we are seeking approval to update these statutes and support the committee language.

Committee Bill 5309 proposes to raise fines for violations of the state's plant regulatory law. The new language being sought for approval in section 22-84 would increase the minimum fine to five-hundred dollars and raise the maximum fine to two-thousand five-hundred dollars per violation. The current fines of five dollars and one-hundred dollars have existed for several decades. With the discovery of the emerald ash borer, a very destructive insect pest of ash trees, in several locations of New Haven County, the increased fines are needed to help enforce the state quarantine and regulations on the movement of wood out of regulated areas to slow the spread of this insect and any future destructive pests. The movement of firewood, in particular, is a high risk activity that needs state control.

Committee Bill 5310 concerns the duties of the Experiment Station's Board of Control. We are seeking an amendment to section 22-81(c) to limit currently mandated duties subject to applicable budgetary considerations. The Experiment Station's current duties include performing analyses for other state agencies, such as testing food and water samples for toxic chemicals and analyzing fertilizers, seeds, etc. Reductions in the Experiment Station's operating budget coupled with rising costs of performing analyses forces us to set priorities on how state funds are used. Food safety issues must take priority, and we must also have sufficient funds to pay our utility bills and other expenses.

Committee Bill 5311 proposes a line to sec. 22-84 to clearly state the Director's authority to enter into permits and compliance agreements (i.e., specialized contracts) with any party in carrying out the duties described in sec. 22-84 on the regulation of plant pests. The recent discovery of the emerald ash borer in northern New Haven County prompted us to issue a state quarantine on all of New Haven County. In addition, state regulations were passed last year to control, by a permit process, the movement of firewood, logs, and other raw wood products. Our state quarantine mirrors a federal quarantine, and along with our state regulations, allows the movement of wood under certain conditions, such as kiln sterilization, heat treatment, debarking methods, chipping, and fumigation. The USDA uses compliance agreements for the interstate movement of regulated articles. We are currently using a fair and expedient permit process to review requests from businesses, municipalities, and homeowners to move wood. There

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is a need to utilize permits and compliance agreements to regulate the movement of a wide range of plants and plant materials to prevent the spread of several current or future plant pests or diseases that might threaten the state's forestry resources, bedding plant businesses, or the nursery industry.

We would be happy to answer questions. Thank you.



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