The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chairman
House Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, Food and
Drug Administration and Related Agencies
2362-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Farr
Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on Agriculture
Rural Development, Food and
Drug Administration and Related Agencies
2362-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

April 16, 2013

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member Farr,

In Vermont, three non-native insects currently threaten our forests: the hemlock woolly adelgid, Asian longhorned beetle (ALB), and the emerald ash borer (EAB). Although the hemlock woolly adelgid is the only pest currently in Vermont, both ALB and EAB are within 50 miles of our borders. Over half of the trees in Vermont are host to one of these insects and are at great risk. With an annual forest products industry of over $1 billion dollars, we cannot afford to let these pests devastate our forests.

With 58 million national forested acres at risk from forest pests, I strongly support maintaining FY12 funding levels for the APHIS Tree and Wood Pests program. This program funds eradication efforts for invasive species and works to prevent the further spread of invasive species like the Asian longhorned beetle and the emerald ash borer.

Close to 500 species of foreign insects and diseases have become established in the U.S., and a new damaging pest is introduced every 2 to 3 years. It is APHIS’ responsibility to prevent such introductions and to respond effectively when pests are introduced. According to the National Woodland Owner Survey, the threat of forest pests is the number one concern for family forest owners, of which there are more than 10 million nationwide. When an invasive species infests a family’s forest, it can destroy their investment, making it difficult to recover since most tree farmers depend on their forests for the majority of their income.

The APHIS Tree and Wood Pest program’s principle effort is eradication of the Asian longhorned beetle. This pest threatens the vitality of maples and birches, among other trees species, and could devastate forests from Maine to Minnesota at a cost of more than $600 billion.

I appreciate your consideration of this request to protect Vermont’s forests and forests across the country.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

PETER WELCH
Member of Congress