

importation and that wood chips of tropical species of *Eucalyptus* from South America be fumigated with methyl bromide, heat treated, or heat treated with moisture reduction prior to importation. We are also proposing to allow wood chips derived from both tropical and temperate species of *Eucalyptus* from South America to be treated with a surface pesticide. These proposed changes are necessary in order to prevent the introduction of plant pests into the United States through the importation of eucalyptus logs, lumber, and wood chips from South America.

DATES: We will consider all comments that we receive on or before November 14, 2003.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments by postal mail/commercial delivery or by e-mail. If you use postal mail/commercial delivery, please send four copies of your comment (an original and three copies) to: Docket No. 02-097-1, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3C71, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Please state that your comment refers to Docket No. 02-097-1. If you use e-mail, address your comment to regulations@aphis.usda.gov. Your comment must be contained in the body of your message; do not send attached files. Please include your name and address in your message and "Docket No. 02-097-1" on the subject line.

You may read any comments that we receive on this docket in our reading room. The reading room is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 690-2817 before coming.

APHIS documents published in the **Federal Register**, and related information, including the names of organizations and individuals who have commented on APHIS dockets, are available on the Internet at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppd/rad/webrepor.html>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Hesham Abuelnaga, Import Specialist, Phytosanitary Issues Management Team, PPQ, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 140, Riverdale, MD 20737-1236; (301) 734-5334.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Logs, lumber, and other unmanufactured wood articles imported into the United States could pose a significant hazard of introducing plant

pests and pathogens detrimental to agriculture and to natural, cultivated, and urban forest resources. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has implemented regulations to prohibit or restrict the importation of logs, lumber, and other unmanufactured wood articles into the United States from certain parts of the world. These regulations, which are found in "Subpart—Logs, Lumber, and Other Unmanufactured Wood Articles" (7 CFR 319.40-1 through 319.40-11, referred to below as the regulations), are designed to prevent the dissemination of plant pests that are new to or not widely distributed within the United States.

An increased interest in the importation of unmanufactured wood articles into the United States from other countries has led to an increased demand for fast-growing trees, such as those of the genus *Eucalyptus*. The fast growth rate, environmental adaptability, and high quality for pulp production of this genus make it one of the most widely propagated genera of trees in the world. South American governments, including those of Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay, have encouraged the planting of these fast-growing trees. Brazil has the largest area of *Eucalyptus* plantations in the world, with approximately 3 million hectares planted with various species. Although allowed under the current regulations under certain conditions, logs, lumber, and wood chips of *Eucalyptus* are not being imported currently into the United States from South America. Recently, however, wood products industries in the United States have expressed interest in importing large volumes of *Eucalyptus* wood chips from South America.

Pest Risk Assessment

Since these articles would be a new commodity to the United States, APHIS believed it was necessary to determine whether the current regulations would provide an adequate level of protection against the introduction of plant pests potentially associated with *Eucalyptus* species if the wood products industries in the United States began importing logs, lumber, and wood chips of species of *Eucalyptus*.

In order to identify the plant pests potentially associated with *Eucalyptus* species and the risk of the introduction and dissemination of these plant pests into the United States from the importation of logs, lumber, and wood chips of species of *Eucalyptus* from South America, the U.S. Forest Service recently prepared a pest risk assessment entitled, "Pest Risk Assessment of the Importation into the United States of

Unprocessed *Eucalyptus* Logs and Chips from South America" (April 2001). This document can be viewed on the Internet at <http://www.fpl.fs.fed.us/documnts/General.htm>, or you can request a copy from the individual listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**. This pest risk assessment found that the pests of greatest concern are those that are native to South America that have adapted to make introduced *Eucalyptus* a suitable host. This adaptability suggests that these pests could pose a risk to a wider host range and could adapt to new hosts in the United States. The potential effects of the introduction of these pests are difficult to predict. Many of the pests that were identified in the pest risk assessment as having a high likelihood of introduction into the United States are more tropical in nature, so their ability to colonize hosts in the United States would be limited to the warmer southern States. However, the pest risk assessment also identified potential negative consequences to Hawaii because of that State's more tropical climate. The pest risk assessment indicated visual inspection alone might not provide the appropriate level of protection against several pests of tropical species of *Eucalyptus* and that additional mitigation methods might be necessary.

Among the insects and pathogens assessed in the risk assessment of *Eucalyptus* species, eight were rated a high risk potential: Purple moth (*Sarsina virescens*), scolytid bark and ambrosia beetles (*Scolytopsis brasiliensis* and *Xyleborus* spp., including *X. retusus* and *X. biconicus*), carpenterworm (*Chilecomadia valdiviana*) on *Eucalyptus nitens*, round-headed wood borers (*Chydarteres striatus*, *Retrachyderes thoracicus*, *Trachyderes* spp., *Steirastoma breve*, *Stenodontes spinibarbis*), eucalyptus longhorned borer (*Phoracantha semipunctata*), Botryosphaeria cankers (*Botryosphaeria dothidea*, *Botryosphaeria obtusa*, *Botryosphaeria ribis*), Ceratocystis canker (*Ceratocystis fimbriata*), and pink disease (*Erythricium salmonicolor*). The Botryosphaeria cankers and Ceratocystis canker are indigenous to the United States, so they would not be classified as quarantine pests under the regulations.

Debarking, which would continue to be a requirement in addition to the proposed requirements for logs and lumber of tropical species of *Eucalyptus* from South America, eliminates, or at least facilitates the detection of, plant pests and pathogens found on the surface of logs, as well as those found immediately beneath the bark. The