Hi Calvin,

First let me clarify that PPQ (me) was the lead for the MBP Phase 1. The Lead for Phase 2 is WS.

This is my first stab a response. I have provided 2 options.

Option 1 (the truth)

Dear Respectable Congresswoman Bordalla,

We were surprised to receive your inquiry concerning the Pacific Safeguarding Initiative (PSI) and phytosanitary issues in the pacific. We are a little concerned by your interest in protecting the US Pacific.

PPQ is aware that as documented in US Code 2011 Title 48 (http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2011-title48/pdf/USCODE-2011-title48-chap19-sec2001.pdf) that Congress found that “the US does not have a clearly defined policy for United States noncontiguous Pacific areas (including the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, Guam, the State of Hawaii, and the State of Alaska)”. Rest assured we care. We care so much that in the last year and a half, PPQ has directed our Pacific Safeguarding Initiative to cease working with USAID to get quarantine projects classified as a form of aid so USAID could direct a portion of the recipients allotted funds toward safeguarding activities. We just don’t care that much.

The Global Environment Facility* (GEF) was willing to focus $300,00.00 on the awareness, prevention, control, and eradication of pests and pest pathways that are of concern to the US in the Pacific. At the same time, the PSI was working with the US Forest Service (USFS) to match the $300,00.00 GEF funds. The PSI coordinated and received verbal commitments from both GEF and the USFS to fund projects in the American Pacific totaling 600K to fight pests that are important to and are considered a high priority for PPQ. Although this would have been very beneficial in reducing pest risks to the US, this type of coordination was new to APHIS, so we decided not to pursue this. We directed the PSI to stop all progress with working with this initiative.

Although the Presidents and Governors of Micronesia Region gave support and were willing to sign a regional agreement, PPQ has directed the PSI to withdraw it’s actions in assisting the drafting of the documents that would put in writing their commitment to increase funding for safeguarding (exclusion, containment, eradication, etc.) activities in their countries and states. This was expected to be very beneficial, but again, it was a little outside the box in which PPQ is willing to work.

But wait! There’s More!!

We halted the interagency cooperation with the Office of Insular Affairs (OIA). We were working with the OIA to earmark a small portion of their allocation to the Compact States to be applied to safeguarding (Q/IS) issues.

* Global Environment Facility
Although the OIA was interested in discussing this with us further, we thought it best to not go there, so we directed the PSI to stop all progress on this too.

The PSI Manager successfully represented the US at the Pacific Plant Protection Organisation (PPPO) in Nadi, Fiji, and accepted the position of Vice-Chair for the US, and served as a key drafter of the “Strategic Framework”, and the “Operational Plan”. This was a very successful initiative and both documents were adopted by the PPPO Board. Although GS-13s in our department regularly interact with foreign governments and NGOs, and this GS-13 was very successful as a GS-14 Trade Director at Headquarters negotiating directly with Foreign Governments by himself, we decided that GS-13s were not qualified to interact with foreign entities - so instead we sent a GS-12 with no international technical experience to follow up meetings. After all, this GS-12 did have experience coordinating lunches and finding hotels, etc. at international meetings. Although we received reports from the head of the PPPO and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) that the GS-12 did not say one word, and offered no benefit to the PPPO, we are very pleased with our decision and retain her as our person of choice for these meetings.

We understand that it may seem logical to gather data and information on what the new and emerging plant pest threats are in the pacific, as well as gather data and information on what pests threaten the Pacific- after all this is in our Strategic Plan. The PSI was gathering data on what the new and emerging plant pest threats are in the pacific which threaten Guam, Hawaii, the US Pacific Territories, Compact States, and the US Mainland. It might seem logical to you for us to do this, especially if you consider the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle infestations in Guam and Hawaii, but trust us – we think we know what we are doing. We decided not to support this action as well, so we cancelled all activities related to this.

We also directed the PSI to stop coordinating with SPC and the National Invasive Species Council to create an SPC Agriculturist position which would address invasive species, quarantine and safeguarding issues in the Pacific with a focus on the American Pacific. After all, we don’t support coordination efforts in the Pacific.

We also directed the PSI to stop all actions which would help us determine what the plans, strategies, capabilities, and limits are in the US Pacific Territories and Compact States for addressing quarantine issues that are of concern to the US.

Even though the American Pacific countries, Territories, and Commonwealths requested that the PSI establish and develop the America Pacific Plant Health Directors Forum as was done (and had been successful and valuable) in the Greater Caribbean Region, we directed our PSI not to do so.

We directed the PSI to not develop public outreach materials (similar to our “Don’t Pack a Pest) to be disseminated throughout Guam and the Micronesia Region. You might wonder why we supported this action in Hawaii and the Caribbean yet do not support it for Guam and the US Pacific,. That is a good question. The answer is that the Pacific simply is not high on our priority list. Being a Congresswoman for Guam, we are sure you understand.

We could give you more examples, but we don’t want to bore you.

Thank you for your inquiry,
Sincerely,
< signed >

Option 2 (Attached as a word document)

Dear Respectable Congresswoman Bordalla,
We were pleased to receive your inquiry concerning phytosanitary issues in the Pacific. We are encouraged by your interest in protecting the US Pacific.
Recognizing the uniqueness of Guam, Hawaii, and the pest pressures from the Pacific and Asia regions, the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Animal Plant Health Inspection Service’s (APHIS) Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) established the Pacific Safeguarding Initiative (PSI) which was designed to reduce or eliminate risks before they approach the shores of the U.S. The PSI accomplished this by building a coordinated framework and partnership network with National Plant Protection Organizations, Regional Plant Protection Organizations, Universities, Non-government organizations (domestic and foreign), U.S. Embassy staffs, and other organizations. Its goal is to strengthen regional and national pest exclusion activities within the Asia and Pacific Region, enhance pest detection activities within the region, strengthen pest mitigation and suppression activities, and enhance communication and reporting of pest detection and mitigation activities within the region. Further, PSI worked to build the capacity of National and Regional Plant Protection Organizations as well as key stakeholders to effectively manage current and future pest risks, and to negotiate with other U.S. Agencies in order to elevate invasive species issues within their departments.

The PSI took the USDA lead role for the completion of Phase 1 of the Micronesia Biosecurity Plan which looked at and evaluated risks from multiple pathways. This includes travelers, conveyances, commodities, cargo, military movements, and others.

The PSI attended the Pacific Plant Protection Organization (PPPO) and took a lead role in drafting the PPPO 2012-2018 Strategic Framework (adopted), and to develop a three year implementation plan (adopted).

USDA provides funding through the Farm Bill to develop Pest Management Practices for non-native pests on nursery plants. The PSI reviews and approves or rejects Farm Bill funded Cooperative Agreement projects and financial plans and budgets. These projects are for early plant pest detection and surveillance, for threat identification and mitigation of plant pests and diseases, and for technical assistance in the development and implementation of audit-based certification systems and pest risk management systems. For Fiscal Year (FY) 2013, there are 26 agreements, totaling $958,701.00, and for FY2014, there are 27 pending agreements, totaling $3,391,341.

PPQ uses available information and staff to strengthen and create programs which reduce the risks and close pathways for pests entering US States, Territories, and Commonwealths regardless of what the pests are or their origin. PPQ Hawaii has multiple work units in Guam and Hawaii where we work closely with State, private and federal partners to achieve the reduction of risks in those areas as well as in the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and America Samoa. Together many agency programs serve as a safety net to reduce risks from entering Guam and Hawaii.

PPQ’s Smuggling Interdiction and Trade Compliance (SITC) program is active in Hawaii and the American Pacific with the purpose of detecting and closing pathways in which restricted or prohibited agricultural commodities make illegal entry into the United States and her Territories. SITC partners with various agencies including other USDA agencies, the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Customs & Border Protection (CBP), the US Fish & Wildlife Service, the US Food & Drug Administration, various Hawaii State Agencies, and the University of Hawaii at Manoa to achieve its goal of closing pathways. SITC also conducts PPQ Officer and safeguarding training in Guam, American Samoa, and CNMI Departments of Agriculture for local quarantine officers. SITC established a network of informants, importers, retailers, and joint federal/state/county agency contacts which allows for the quick acquisition of intelligence making APHIS’ mission objectives more easily achieved.

PPQ takes lead roles in emergency response exercises in cooperation with the Guam Department of Agriculture (GDOA), the University of Guam, and Guam industry representatives. These exercises, which practice the use of the Incident Command System (ICS), are designed to enable quick and effective responses from all regulatory agencies to effectively and swiftly address ecological, agrosecurity emergencies.
PPQ facilitates legal and safe trade of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) materials by maintaining CITES protocols and abilities at the USDA Plant Inspection Stations in Guam and Hawaii. All CITES shipments are inspected for proper documentation and all materials are inspected for quarantine pests to ensure protection of Hawaii’s agricultural and nursery industries.

To further close pathways, PPQ, GOA, and HDOA require permits to be obtained for the importation, transit, domestic movement, and environmental release of foreign organisms that could impact our ecosystem and agriculture if permitting requirements are not established. Permits are issued in consultation with HDOA and in accordance with federal regulation and under the authority of the Plant Protection and Honeybee Acts. Other actions taken in responses to the information gained from the analysis include adding additional information in import permits for palm seeds entering Hawaii, training CBP Agriculture Inspectors (AI) on the requirements and inspection of seeds entering the Guam and Hawaii under special Import Permits, and working closely with CBP/AI at the U.S. Postal Service facility identifying plants and plant products that are admissible or prohibited into Guam and Hawaii. All of these achievements further contribute to the reduction of the movement of pests into Guam and Hawaii.

PPQ is working with GDOA and HDOA and is committed to addressing their concerns for improved notification procedures of the possible importation of federal non-actionable pests which may not have significant impacts to the nation’s agriculture industry, but may have significant impacts to Guam and Hawaii’s agriculture and natural resources. These non-actionable pests are imported into Guam and Hawaii, either accidentally or intentionally through the air and maritime pathways.

Again, thank you for your interest and support for QQP’s actions and achievements in the Pacific. If you have any questions or wish to discuss the issue further, we welcome the opportunity to discuss this important part of USDA with you.

Sincerely,

< signed >

If this is too long, let me know and I can reduce it for you.

Thanks,
Ken

Kenneth Werner
National Operations Manager
USDA APHIS PPQ
300 Ala Moana Blvd, Unit 8-120
Honolulu, HI 96850
Phone: 808-838-2794
Fax: 808-541-1994
Kenneth.p.werner@aphis.usda.gov
From: Shuler, Calvin H - APHIS  
Sent: Thursday, June 19, 2014 9:52 AM  
To: Werner, Kenneth - APHIS  
Subject: FW: Congressional Inquiry: Pacific Safeguarding Initiative

On the phone. Will call soon.

Calvin H. Shuler  
Director - Exclusion and Imports  
920 Main Campus Drive  
Raleigh, NC 27606  
919-855-7326 - Office  
919-349-3319 - Cell  
Calvin.H.Shuler@aphis.usda.gov

From: Royer, Matthew H - APHIS  
Sent: Thursday, June 19, 2014 3:04 PM  
To: Shuler, Calvin H - APHIS  
Subject: FW: Congressional Inquiry: Pacific Safeguarding Initiative

Calvin-

I suggest we craft a diplomatic explanation about how we analyzed plant pest risks over several years and determined we do not have a lead role, compared to BT Snake. Please take a stab at it and share with me. I will share with Bill.

Thanks.

Matt

From: Clay, Bill H - APHIS  
Sent: Thursday, June 19, 2014 12:58 PM  
To: Royer, Matthew H - APHIS  
Subject: RE: Congressional Inquiry: Pacific Safeguarding Initiative

Matt,

I talked to Phil Andreozzi. He said that WS is not involved in the Pacific Safeguarding Initiative, just PPQ. He thought that Congresswoman Bordalla wanted to know how is USDA (PPQ) going to be involved in the implementation of the safeguarding initiative. WS was the lead on Phase 1 of the Micronesian Biosecurity Plan, but that is not the same as the Pacific Safeguarding Initiative. That's about all I know on this, but call if you have any questions.

PPQ

WS is lead for phase 2
Bill

From: Royer, Matthew H - APHIS  
Sent: Thursday, June 19, 2014 1:07 PM  
To: Clay, Bill H - APHIS  
Subject: FW: Congressional Inquiry: Pacific Safeguarding Initiative

Bill-

You may call me. I spoke with Calvin and I will provide him with direction after we talk.

Thanks,

Matt
970-494-7503

From: Clay, Bill H - APHIS  
Sent: Thursday, June 19, 2014 9:12AM  
To: Royer, Matthew H - APHIS  
Subject: RE: Congressional Inquiry: Pacific Safeguarding Initiative

Thanks Matt.

Bill

From: Royer, Matthew H - APHIS  
Sent: Thursday, June 19, 2014 10:12 AM  
To: Clay, Bill H - APHIS  
Cc: Shuler, Calvin H - APHIS; Hough, Katherine P - APHIS  
Subject: FW: Congressional Inquiry: Pacific Safeguarding Initiative

Bill-

Calvin will ask for your input before we respond.

Thanks,

Matt

From: Hough, Katherine P - APHIS  
Sent: Thursday, June 19, 2014 8:08 AM  
To: Royer, Matthew H - APHIS  
Cc: Bertone, Christie A - APHIS; Shuler, Calvin H - APHIS  
Subject: FW: Congressional Inquiry: Pacific Safeguarding Initiative

Matt,

Here is the email we received.

Calvin, Matt will call you today to discuss how to answer this request.

Katie
Good morning,

Congresswoman Bordalla (D-Guam) has requested information about our Pacific Safeguarding Initiative. Could PPQ provide a summary and any recent updates on the initiative by Monday?

Thanks, and let me know if you have any questions.