

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
PROPOSED CHANGES IN THE REGULATIONS

Title 3, California Code of Regulations

Section 3700

Oak Mortality Disease Control

INITIAL STATEMENT OF REASONS/

POLICY STATEMENT OVERVIEW

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (Department) proposes to amend Title 3, California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 3700 Oak Mortality Disease Control to incorporate by reference “APHIS Lists of Proven Hosts of and Plants Associated with *Phytophthora ramorum*”.

Description of the Public Problem, Administrative Requirement, or Other Condition or Circumstance the Regulation is Intended to Address

These regulations are intended to address the obligation of the Secretary of Food and Agriculture to protect the agricultural industry of California from the movement and spread within California of injurious plant pests as required by Food and Agricultural Code (FAC) Sections 401 and 403.

Purpose and Factual Basis

The specific purpose of amending California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 3700 Oak Mortality Disease Control is to update the known host list for *Phytophthora ramorum*, a fungus which causes oak mortality disease (sudden oak death), to coincide with the official *Phytophthora ramorum* host list promulgated in September, 2022 by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). By matching the California host list with the USDA host list, the Department will be able to enact any quarantine needed against the *Phytophthora ramorum* using the federal standards.

California's requirements for the *Phytophthora ramorum* must parallel the USDA requirements or the entire state will be quarantined if the pest is detected. Therefore, the oak mortality disease control rules must regulate hosts based on the revised USDA host list.

The factual basis for the determination by the Department that the amendment of Section 3700 is necessary is as follows:

Since the mid-1990s, *Phytophthora ramorum* has killed millions of tanoak trees and several oak tree species (coast live oak, California black oak, Shreve oak, and canyon live oak), and caused twig and foliar diseases in numerous other plant species, including California bay laurel, Douglas fir, and coast redwood.

The Department has determined that *Phytophthora ramorum* is a serious forest pest for which quarantine control is required to prevent further artificial spread and harm to forests, parks, commercial and urban landscapes, and watersheds. This disease is currently known to occur in 15 California counties. Oak mortality disease is serious due to the fact that it kills tanoak, coast live oak, and black oak trees. In addition, the pest has been confirmed as infecting non-oak species such as rhododendron, huckleberry, bigleaf maple, California buckeye, California coffeeberry, manzanita, toyon, and other hosts causing foliar and stem disease symptoms. *Phytophthora ramorum* has the capability of causing significant irreparable harm to California's agricultural industry and environment.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) maintains a list of plants which are either proven hosts or plants associated with *Phytophthora ramorum*. The USDA has determined proven hosts to be those for which "Koch's Postulates" (the gold standard for establishing the microbiological etiology of infection and disease) have been satisfied or plants which have been found naturally infected in the environment. The associated plants have been determined by the USDA as those which can be artificially inoculated to produce

disease symptoms, but which have not fully satisfied “Koch’s Postulates.” These postulates are criteria that are followed to prove the pathogenicity of a microorganism. If the relationship between a pathogen and organism exhibits these criteria, then a pathogen is identified as the organism responsible for the disease.

The USDA does not have a standard for declaring less than a county as a quarantine area. Without a parallel State regulation for the intrastate movement of associated articles and host material that is substantially the same as the federal domestic quarantine and related federal orders, the USDA cannot regulate less than the entire State.

Project Description

This amendment will enable the Department to minimize the chance of *Phytophthora ramorum* being moved outside any active quarantine zone by having a host list that mirrors federal standards. To do so the current host list within the regulation has been removed and the current federal host list, *Phytophthora ramorum Restricted, regulated, and associated articles; Lists of proven hosts of and plants associated with Phytophthora ramorum*, dated September 2022, is now incorporated by reference. By incorporating this file by reference the Department will be able to enact any quarantine needed against the *Phytophthora ramorum* using the federal standards.

Current Laws & Regulations

Existing law, FAC section 407, provides that the Secretary may adopt such regulations as are reasonably necessary to carry out the provisions of this code which the Secretary is directed or authorized to administer or enforce.

Existing law, FAC section 5321, provides that the Secretary is obligated to investigate the existence of any pest that is not generally distributed within California and determine the probability of its spread, and the feasibility of its control or eradication.

Existing law, FAC section 5322, provides that the Secretary may establish, maintain, and enforce quarantine, eradication, and such other regulations as are in the Secretary's opinion necessary to circumscribe and exterminate or prevent the spread of any pest which is described in FAC section 5321.

Existing law, FAC section 24.5, states that inasmuch as plants growing in native stands or planted for ornamental purposes contribute to the environmental and public health and welfare needs of the people of the state, the Legislature hereby finds and declares that such plants shall be considered as a part of the agricultural industry for the purpose of any law that provides for the protection of the agricultural industry from pests.

The existing law obligates the Secretary to investigate and determine the feasibility of controlling or eradicating pests of limited distribution but establishes discretion with regard to the establishment and maintenance of regulations to achieve this goal. This amendment provides the necessary regulatory authority to prevent the artificial spread of a serious insect pest, which is a mandated statutory goal.

FAC Section 401.5 states, "the department shall seek to protect the general welfare and economy of the state and seek to maintain the economic well-being of agriculturally dependent rural communities in this state." In September, 2022 the United States Department of Agriculture released a revised, more extensive host list for *Phytophthora ramorum*. If the fungus were allowed to spread and become established in host areas, California's agricultural industry would suffer losses due to decreased production, increased pesticide use, and loss of markets if other states or countries enacted quarantines against California products. Therefore, it is necessary to amend Section 3700 for the pest *Phytophthora ramorum* to reflect the changes and additions in the host list.

Evaluation of Inconsistency/Incompatibility with Existing State Regulations

The Department is the only agency that can implement host list. As required by Gov. Code Section 11346.5(a)(3)(D), the Department has conducted an evaluation of these regulations

and has determined that it is not inconsistent or incompatible with existing State regulations.

Anticipated Benefits from This Regulatory Action

Preventing the artificial spread of *Phytophthora ramorum* economically benefits all Californians and businesses involved in the production or sale of host material located outside the infested regulated area. Tourism in the unregulated area isn't negatively impacted by restrictions on access to parks and forests that would be necessary either to prevent disease spread or to ensure protection from hazardous trees, or due to loss of the host trees that would affect parks' and forests' visual aesthetic. Local governments do not face unexpected costs when they must remove infected dead or hazardous trees in parks, parkways, along roadsides or adjacent to public buildings. Homeowners do not have to use protective sprays to protect their specimen oaks or face costs for the removal of hazardous trees and loss of their property values.

California Environmental Quality Act

Prior to conducting any action authorized by this regulation, the Department shall comply with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (Public Resources Code Section 21000 et. seq. as amended) and the State CEQA Guidelines (Title 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15000 et. seq.).

Mandate on Local Agencies or School Districts

The Department has determined that these regulations do not impose a mandate on local agencies or school districts.

Economic Impact Analysis (Government Code 11346.3(b))

The prevention of the spread of *Phytophthora ramorum* in California through regulation of host material via the amendment and implementation of this regulation prevent economic harm to:

- the general public

- homeowners and community gardens
- agricultural industry
- the State's general fund.

By the Department neglecting to regulate the types of hosts, this fungus pest could spread into the local environment via the surrounding non-agricultural ecosystems. This could adversely impact private and commercial landscape plantings, local, regional, state and national parks, other recreational sites, open habitats, and wild lands. Affected plants could become less vigorous and may produce fewer seeds. Plants/trees with low propagule output can result in major changes to plant community structure.

The Creation or Elimination of Jobs within the State

The amendment is designed to minimize the spread of *Phytophthora ramorum* in California through regulation of host material. Detection activities are currently being performed by existing state staff throughout the State. Therefore, the Department has determined that this regulatory proposal will not have a significant impact on the creation or elimination of jobs in the State of California.

The Creation or Elimination of Businesses in California

The amendment is designed to minimize the spread of *Phytophthora ramorum* in California through regulation of host material. Detection activities are currently being performed by existing state staff throughout the State. Therefore, the Department has determined that this regulatory proposal will not have a significant impact on the creation of new businesses in the State of California.

The Expansion of Businesses in California

The amendment is designed to minimize the spread of *Phytophthora ramorum* in California through regulation of host material. Compliance activities are currently being performed by existing state staff throughout quarantine areas within the State. Therefore, the Department has determined that this regulatory proposal will not have a significant impact

on the expansion of businesses currently doing business in the State of California.

Worker Safety

The amendment of this regulation is not expected to have an effect on worker safety.

Estimated Cost or Savings to Public Agencies or Affected Private Individuals or Entities

The Department has determined that Section 3700 does not impose a mandate on local agencies or school districts. All compliance activities shall be conducted by the Department. Therefore, no reimbursement is required under Section 17561 of the Government Code.

The Department also has determined that no reimbursable costs or savings under Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of the Government Code to local agencies or school districts and no nondiscretionary costs or savings to local agencies or school districts, will result from the amendment of Section 3700.

There are no reimbursable costs or savings under Part 7 (commencing with section 17500) of Division 4 of the Government Code to local agencies or school districts and no nondiscretionary costs or savings to local agencies or school districts anticipated from the adoption of this amendment.

The Department has determined that the proposed actions will not have a significant adverse economic impact on housing costs or California business, including the ability of California businesses to compete with businesses in other states.

Potential Impact to Homeowners and Community Gardens

Modifying the host list would result in no impacts to the general public because there are already many common host species on the list. By having a host list that is maintained with the most current information the Department has a higher likelihood of keeping the pest from spreading in California.

Potential Impacts to General Fund and Welfare

The proposed regulations do not have immediate or definitive impact to the general fund or general welfare. They will make it more likely that *Phytophthora ramorum* would be detected before an infestation can happen, and if there is an infestation react quickly and effectively. Speed of response is key to eradicating an incipient pest infestation. Programmatic delays potentially can lead to pest quarantines, as well as increased production costs and potential job loss. The agricultural industry is one of the economic engines in the state. Negative impacts to agriculture impact the state's economic recovery and the general welfare of the state. Additionally, any further job losses in this area would likely be felt by low-skilled workers whose employment options are already limited. The loss of any additional agricultural jobs would likely result in an increase in the State's public assistance obligations which would also negatively impact the state's economic recovery.

Assessment

These conclusions are based upon the same analysis related to the adverse economic impact on business above. Further the Department does not expect these actions to create jobs or businesses.

The Department has made an assessment that the amendment to these regulations would: (1) not create or eliminate jobs within California, (2) not create new business or eliminate existing businesses within California, (3) not affect the expansion of businesses currently doing business within California, (4) is expected to benefit the health and welfare of California residents, (5) is expected to benefit the state's environment, and (6) not expected to benefit workers' safety.

Health and welfare: The proposed action will benefit the health and welfare of California residents by making it more likely that *Phytophthora ramorum* would be detected before an infestation can happen, and, if there is an infestation, the Department can react quickly and effectively. Speed of response is key to eradicating an incipient pest infestation. Programmatic delays potentially can lead to pest quarantines, as well as increased

production costs and potential job loss.

The state's environment: The proposed action will benefit the state's environment by increasing the chance that *Phytophthora ramorum* would be detected before an infestation can happen. If the Department neglects to regulate the types of hosts, this fungus pest could spread into the local environment via the surrounding non-agricultural ecosystems. This could adversely impact private and commercial landscape plantings, local, regional, state and national parks, other recreational sites, open habitats, and wild lands. Affected plants could become less vigorous and may produce fewer seeds. Plants/trees with low propagule output can result in major changes to plant community structure.

Alternatives Considered

The Department must determine that no alternative would be more effective in carrying out the purpose for which the action is proposed or would be as effective as well as less burdensome to affected private persons than the proposed actions.

The Department considered taking no action. If no action is taken the host lists in Section 3700 will no longer be consistent with the September 2022 USDA list. This could lead to the Department not correctly applying any quarantines for *Phytophthora ramorum* to all potential host material. This would potentially result in further quarantines throughout the State with the concomitant economic and operational impacts on host commodity producers, venders, and home growers.

Information Relied Upon

The Department is relying upon the following studies, reports, and documents in the amendment of Section 3700:

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), *Phytophthora ramorum Restricted, regulated, and associated articles; Lists of proven hosts of and plants associated with Phytophthora ramorum* , September 2022

For Information/Action, DA-2013-41, October 23, 2013, Phytophthora ramorum (ramorum blight, dieback, sudden oak death): Listing and Regulation of a Plant Species Reported to be Associated with P. ramorum, Osama El-Lissy, Deputy Administrator, Plant Protection and Quarantine and its attached federal order.

Green Diamond Resource Company, 2020. California Timberlands Forest Management Plan. September 2020.

USDA 2008. Risk Analysis for Phytophthora ramorum Werres, de Cock & Man in't Veld, Causal Agent of Sudden Oak Death, Ramorum Leaf Blight, and Ramorum Dieback, January 25, 2008
https://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/pram/downloads/pdf_files/pracphst-08.pdf

US Forest Service, Research Partnerships, Sudden Oak Death Research - Phytophthora ramorum. Accessed: 5/12/2021, <https://www.fs.fed.us/psw/partnerships/sod/>