**RESOLUTION # 31**

**INVASIVE PESTS AND THE PHILLIP ALAMPI BENEFICIAL INSECT LABORATORY**

**WHEREAS**, the increasingly globalized nature of the world’s economy means more goods are imported to, and exported from, the United States, with many of them arriving via ship or air transport; and

 **WHEREAS,** New Jersey is both home to, and is surrounded by states that have, numerous large commercial ports; and

 **WHEREAS**, requirements for shipping containers and packaging vary throughout the world, and can result in insects and diseases not native to the United States arriving in the containers and packaging of goods, often concealed in packing materials; and

 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey must be prepared to detect, control, and eradicate foreign invasive pests that could cause severe damage to the state’s agricultural crops, livestock, pets and wooded areas; and

 **WHEREAS**, 2017-18 saw the first-ever arrivals in New Jersey of the exotic Longhorned Tick and the Spotted Lanternfly, both invasive pests; and

 **WHEREAS**, the Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) is the subject of an interior statewide quarantine, as the Department aims to combat its spread and populations; and

 **WHEREAS**, the SLF in particular can cause significant damage to a number of high-value agricultural crops, and is the subject of a current cooperative effort between the Department and the USDA to prevent the SLF’s spread in the state, with the ultimate goal of eradicating it; and

 **WHEREAS**, the cooperative effort with USDA has resulted in $1.0 million in federal funding coming to New Jersey to help stop the SLF, and the Department’s Division of Plant Industry estimates that it needs at least double that amount in federal funding to successfully battle the SLF; and

 **WHEREAS**, the Division needs additional tools that would help enact preventive-treatment agreements outside of quarantine zones and to expedite judicial orders for those property owners within quarantine zones who refuse to allow treatments on their properties; and

 **WHEREAS**, governments at all levels are aware of the concerns of some members of the public regarding chemical pesticides, and New Jersey in particular is sensitive to the desire of residents to attack pests through biological methods whenever the use of chemicals can be avoided; and

 **WHEREAS,** in order to facilitate biological pest-control methods, New Jersey in 1985 established the Phillip Alampi Beneficial Insect Laboratory (PABIL) within its Division of Plant Industry to breed effective predator insects and other life forms that attack and kill invasive pests; and

 **WHEREAS**, methods created at PABIL that have been successful in attacking invasive pests include predatory wasps that kill Mexican bean beetle, the Derodontidae beetle that feeds on hemlock woolly adelgid, and fungi released into the environment that kill gypsy moth caterpillars by invading their digestive tracts and stopping them from eating; and

 **WHEREAS**, the cost of air-handling repairs at PABIL to ensure that all breeding rooms in the facility are working optimally for the most efficient and effective rearing of beneficial biological controls has increased by approximately $3 million beyond the initial estimate of $4.5 million, largely due to the extensive amount of time it took for the Department to repeatedly propose, and then finally have funded, those repairs through the Capital Budget; and

 **WHEREAS**, pending bills in the New Jersey Legislature would have created an “Invasive Species Task Force,” differentiated from the prior “Invasive Species Council” that was eliminated years ago, to combat the entry and spread of new invasive species into the state, but was vetoed; and

 **WHEREAS**, the Task Force, under the pending legislation, would have been charged in part to “prepare a comprehensive invasive species management plan for the State,” which would include identifying which species it will consider to be invasive; and

 **WHEREAS**, that process, under previous task forces and councils charged with creating such a plan, has been challenging because certain non-native species grown by New Jersey nursery producers were listed, although they had not proven previously to be a threat for invasive growth; and

**WHEREAS**, pending legislation requires the New Jersey Department of Agriculture to adopt rules and regulations to create a permitting program for the safe sale, distribution, and propagation of invasive plant species in the State and will include criteria for exempting a cultivar of a restricted plant species that proves to be non-invasive by virtue of sterility factors or other stable genetic traits unique to that cultivar; and that the Department, in consultation with the Department of Environmental Protection, and other organizations shall, from time to time, adopt regulations to designate additional plant species as “invasive plant species” for purposes of this legislation; and

**WHEREAS**, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture is the most appropriate agency (through experience, expertise, personnel, and existing enforcement processes) to oversee final regulation of invasive species (plants along with associated insects and plant diseases), and that current NJDA efforts to control Spotted Lantern Fly in both agricultural and natural settings bear this out; and

**WHEREAS**, the NJDEP is already provided a key role in this process by virtue of its inclusion at the New Jersey Invasive Species Council level.

 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 109th State Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 7-8, 2024, do hereby urge PABIL and the Division of Plant Industry to continue working to develop biological controls of both invasive and native pests that do harm to agricultural crops, wooded lands and ecosystems.

 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we gratefully acknowledge state funding to address the repairs needed for the heating, ventilation and air conditioning repairs at PABIL in order to allow the facility to operate optimally.

 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that due to the extensive length of time it took for that funding to be approved in the Capital Budget, we urge the state officials in charge of that funding to add approximately $3 million more in funding, as the cost of the project, due to the long time it took to approve the initial $4.5 million request, has increased by roughly $3 million.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that should the legislation to create the New Jersey Invasive Species Task Force advance in a future legislative session, we strongly encourage that the Secretary of Agriculture sit as co-chairperson of the New Jersey Invasive Species Council.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the creation and regulation of the permitting and exemption process should be the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture and must be funded adequately to cover the implementation of that program.