



CHARLES PERRY

TEXAS STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 28

April 21, 2021

APHIS Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD
Station 3A-03.8
4700 River Road Unit 118
Riverdale, MD 20737-1238

Re: Docket ID No. APHIS-2020-0035

To whom it may concern,

As Chairman of the Senate Committee on Water, Agriculture and Rural Affairs, and a Texas Beekeeper, I am writing to oppose the release of biological control agents to attack Chinese Tallow Trees (*Triadica sebifera*). Texas and the nation will experience a devastating loss to one of the major pollinators of 30% of our nation's food supply if permits are issued to release *Bikaskha collaris* and *Gadirtha fusca*.

Tallow trees are the most important source of abundant forage for pollinators and without it, the bee population in the state will suffer. Texas produces 7-8 million pounds of honey per year with 75% of that production directly tied to Tallow trees. Estimates show the proposed introduction of the species would reduce Texas production to less than 2 million pounds per year.

In addition, the agriculture industry collectively generates \$115 billion in annual income. It is important we continue to help this industry thrive as a nation. The agriculture industry, producers, and food supply have already experienced devastating hardships. A robust agriculture industry is the best defense against foreign dependence on our food supply.

The Environmental Assessment conducted by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service with the United States Department of Agriculture did not consider the industry and risks to the ecosystems, nor do they offer a consultation with state agencies with direct impact by introducing the non-native biological control agents.

Again, I ask that the introduction of these species be reconsidered.

Please do not hesitate contacting me at my office at (512) 463-0128 if you would like to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,

Senator Charles Perry, Chair

Senate Committee on Water, Agriculture and Rural Affairs