



Finding of No Significant Impact

***Ceratitis capitata* Cooperative Eradication Program St. Croix, Virgin Islands of the United States Environmental Assessment September 2026**

[Document ID# EAXX-005-32-24P-1788506257]

Background

To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Departmental NEPA implementing procedures, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) prepared an environmental assessment (EA) that analyzes alternatives for control of *Ceratitis* spp. in the U.S. Virgin Islands: specifically, *Ceratitis capitata*, i.e., Mediterranean fruit fly (Medfly). *Ceratitis* spp. fruit flies are exotic agricultural pests periodically detected at actionable levels in the United States.

In January 2026, following separate discoveries of two male Medflies on the island of St. Croix, APHIS and the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture (VIDA) established a surveillance and monitoring program to detect Medfly infestation on the island (APHIS 2026a). APHIS' involvement in a new *Ceratitis* spp. quarantine and control program with VIDA was triggered by laboratory confirmation of four additional specimens as *C. capitata* on August 17 and September 2, 2026, respectively. The flies (three mature male Medflies and one unmated female Medfly) were collected from Jackson traps in tropical almond growing on residential properties in Christiansted, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. The proposed quarantine boundary encompasses the island of St. Croix, minus the outer islands and cays. The quarantined area would cover approximately 84 square miles.

APHIS analyzed potential impacts from possible federal responses to this fruit fly emergency.¹ The resulting EA (APHIS 2026b) relies on a programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) and Record of Decision published in November 2018 (APHIS 2018); APHIS reviews the

¹ *Emergency* under NEPA means a situation demanding immediate or urgent action, where delaying action to follow standard procedures would be contrary to the public interest, as determined by a responsible official. [7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1b.11(a)(13)]

PEIS and all pertinent chemical risk assessments periodically to ensure that reliance on the analysis remains valid.²

Program Information

The EA and supporting environmental documentation are posted on the APHIS website at the following link: [APHIS National Environmental Policy Act Documents: Plant Protection and Quarantine](#). Copies may be requested by contacting

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Public Involvement

APHIS is prepared to consider new information received concerning this emergency program. APHIS may host or sponsor public hearings, public meetings, or other opportunities for public involvement as deemed necessary by the St. Croix Medfly Program to inform the decision-making process or in accordance with statutory requirements (7 CFR 1b.9(k)).

Issues

Potentially major issues considered in the EA for the St. Croix Medfly Program include:

- Impacts on agricultural products
- Environmental fate of chemical treatments
- Risks to human health
- Risks to historic properties
- Risks to Tribal, disabled, and low-income human populations
- Risks to nontarget species

Alternatives

The EA for the proposed *Ceratitis capitata* cooperative program analyzed three action alternatives:

² Previous NEPA documents that are incorporated by reference in this document are incorporated for all content except for certain topics and regulations rescinded by Executive Order and USDA's NEPA implementing procedures at 7 CFR §1b.

1. No Action
2. Quarantine and Commodity Certification
3. Medfly Eradication (Preferred Alternative)

Potential Effects of Alternatives

Each action alternative is associated with potential environmental consequences per the issues; potential impacts were considered in the EA in Chapter 3, *The Affected Environment and Potential Effects to the Environment*. (For the purpose of this document, the terms “environment” and “human environment” are considered synonymous.³)

The No Action alternative (APHIS non-involvement in this emergency pest response) could have adverse consequences for Medfly-host plant spp. produced on the island of St. Croix and impact people relying on these products for income or sustenance, especially rural communities. Unregulated pesticide applications to protect host plants could result in the development of pesticide resistance in Medfly populations and see the establishment of fruit fly populations in the Christiansted region and elsewhere.

Quarantine and commodity restrictions (Alternative 2) without coordinated Medfly eradication at infested sites would likely result in similar effects as the No Action alternative, would require many more inspection and certification personnel, and could harm agricultural trade.

Eradication measures under the proposed action (Alternative 3, the Preferred Alternative) include using chemical compounds that could have potential environmental consequences, but applications could be abated to minimize adverse effects. The prescribed chemical treatments allowed APHIS to eradicate a Medfly outbreak on the nearby island of Puerto Rico (APHIS 2015) and are currently being used to eradicate Medfly on the U.S. mainland, in the San Jose region of California. Medfly eradication would be very beneficial for the St. Croix agricultural community and costs and could reduce the number of people attempting to control fruit fly outbreaks themselves, with unknown environmental consequences, and without coordinating efforts.

The analysis in the EA indicates that implementing the Preferred Alternative, Medfly eradication, will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. This determination is based on the following factors:

³ *Human environment* means comprehensively the natural and physical environment and the relationship of present and future generations of Americans with that environment. *Effect* or *impact* means changes to the human environment from the proposed action or action alternatives that are reasonably foreseeable and have a reasonably close causal relationship to the proposed action or alternatives. (For further explanation see the definitions under 7 CFR §1b.11.)

- Cooperative *Ceratitis* spp. eradication efforts conducted by APHIS and VIDA will be localized on St. Croix, within the U.S. Virgin Islands territory and not national in scope; the proposed program area⁴ is identified in the EA.
- The methods used by the St. Croix Medfly Program to manage exotic fruit fly damage are target-specific and are not likely to negatively affect public health and safety when used as described in the EA. Advance notice to individuals identified as having pesticide sensitivity will be provided before program treatments occur.
- The proposed activities will not have an impact on unique characteristics of the geographic area such as park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. The nature of the methods proposed for alleviating damages is not likely to permanently affect the physical environment, as discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA.
- The effects on the quality of the human environment are not highly controversial. Although there is some opposition by some members of the public to insecticidal use, the proposed program uses are not highly controversial among scientific and industry experts. The EA discusses each method and application of these methods to assure minimal potential effects from their use.
- APHIS analyzed socioeconomic factors to ensure compliance with all environmental laws and executive orders. Based on the EA's analysis in Chapter 3, APHIS' proposed actions are not expected to cause adverse economic impacts or any substantial negative effects on the quality of life for residents on St. Croix and nearby communities.
- Based on the analysis documented in the EA, the effects of the proposed activities under Alternative 3 are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks. The implementation of Alternative 1 or Alternative 2 carries the potential risk of an established exotic fruit fly population in St. Croix.
- The proposed action would not establish a precedent for any future action with adverse effects or represent a decision in principle about future considerations. The EA proposes the use of delimitation trapping and ground-based eradication treatments including targeted foliar spraying and host fruit removal to prevent Medfly from getting a foothold on St. Croix, using methods that are well-established among professionals managing invasive insects.
- Impacts to nontarget species, especially other insects, are expected to have a low to negligible impact based on the available information. Implementation of the Preferred Alternative is not expected to have any adverse effect on migratory birds or their flight corridors, or on other nontarget species in the St. Croix Medfly Program area.

⁴ In this document, "program area" refers to everywhere inside the quarantine boundary, including eradication treatment cores and regulatory control zones.

- An evaluation of the proposed action and its effects on federally listed threatened and endangered species and critical habitat determined that implementation of the Preferred Alternative will have no effect on U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) threatened and endangered species and critical habitat. APHIS also determined the Program would not result in jeopardy for proposed species and critical habitat. In addition, a determination of no effect was made for species under the jurisdiction of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). APHIS will consult with USFWS and NMFS if changes are made such as an expansion of the St. Croix Medfly Program area, or changes in the status of listed species or critical habitat in an affected location, to ensure that federally listed species and critical habitat are protected.
- The proposed activities would not affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor would they likely cause any loss or destruction of cultural, or historical resources as discussed in Chapter 3 of the EA.
- The proposed action will be compliant with all applicable federal, state, territory, and local laws and regulations, and executive orders, for the protection of human health, the environment, U.S. economy, and international trade, as discussed in the EA.

The St. Croix Medfly Program will be monitored throughout its operation. Should APHIS come into possession of information that alters the impact findings of the EA, leading to changes in the Program, the subject will be addressed in a subsequent NEPA document.

NEPA Decision and Rationale

I conclude that the need for action and the issues identified in the EA would be best addressed by implementing Alternative 3, Medfly Eradication. Alternative 3 is the Preferred Alternative because: (1) it provides the most effective means of ensuring that Medfly does not become established on St. Croix; (2) it will benefit the agricultural crops on St. Croix best for resource owners and managers within current program funding constraints; (3) it will maximize selectivity of the methods available; (4) it will minimize risks to and conflicts with agricultural production and domestic and international trade; (5) it will minimize risks to nontarget and threatened and endangered species, (6) it will result in low magnitude or negligible effects on other insect populations, and (7) it will not result in adverse direct or indirect effects on the human environment.

APHIS and cooperating partner VIDA propose using integrated pest management to maximize program effectiveness while complying with all relevant laws, regulations, policies, and procedures designed to protect the human environment and in accordance with USDA's NEPA implementing procedures at 7 CFR part 1b.

I find no evidence that the Preferred Alternative – a cooperative emergency fruit fly eradication program conducted in St. Croix – will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. I

have considered and based my finding of no significant impact on the analysis in the referenced EA. Because I have not found evidence of any significant impacts associated with the proposed action, an environmental impact statement is not required, and implementation of the Preferred Alternative may proceed.

/ s /

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September 24, 2026

Date

Appendix A. Literature Cited

- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. 2026a. Substantiation for Categorical Exclusion Determination – for the Project Record. Mediterranean Fruit Fly (*Ceratitidis capitata*) Cooperative Surveillance Program for St. Croix in The Virgin Islands of the United States. April 2026. Washington, DC.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. 2026b. *Ceratitidis capitata* Cooperative Eradication Program, St. Croix, Virgin Islands of the United States, Environmental Assessment—September 2026. [Document ID# EAXX-005-32-24P-1788506257]. Washington, DC.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. 2018. Fruit Fly Cooperative Control Program, Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement—November 2018. Riverdale, MD.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. 2015. Mediterranean Fruit Fly Cooperative Eradication Program, Cabo Rojo Municipality, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico—Environmental Assessment, April 2015. Riverdale, MD.

Appendix B. Acronyms and Abbreviations

Usage	Meaning
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, a USDA subcomponent
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
EA	Environmental Assessment
Medfly	Mediterranean fruit fly, <i>Ceratitidis capitata</i>
NEPA	The National Environmental Policy Act
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service, a U.S. Department of Commerce subcomponent
PEIS	Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement
PPQ	Plant Protection and Quarantine, a branch of APHIS
spp.	Species
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a U.S. Department of the Interior subcomponent
VIDA	U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture