APHIS Issues Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact for Cactus Moth Biological Control

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has completed an environmental assessment (EA) and issued a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) for releasing a parasitoid wasp (*Apanteles opuntiarum)* to control the invasive cactus moth *(Cactoblastis cactorum).*

The cactus moth poses a serious threat to native prickly pear (*Opuntia)* cacti in the United States. After careful analysis, APHIS concluded that releasing *A. opuntiarum* will not affect the quality of the human environment.

Cactus moth was first detected in Florida in 1989. It has since spread north to North Carolina and west along the Gulf Coast to Texas. This invasive moth feeds on *Opuntia* cacti, which play an important role in North American desert ecosystems. Cactus moth infestations have caused widespread damage and continue to threaten native *Opuntia* cacti in the United States.

APHIS will begin reviewing permit applications for the environmental release of *A. opuntiarum*. As part of the permitting process, APHIS will consult with affected States before making final decisions on individual applications.

The EA and FONSI are available for public review at www.aphis.usda.gov/plant-pests-diseases/environmental-assessments.

For more information, email ppqbiocontrol@usda.gov and include "*Apanteles opuntiarum*" in the subject line.

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