

2024 Deputy Administrator's Safeguarding Award: *Ralstonia Exclusion Program Framework Team*

This team's work culminated in the launch of the new *Ralstonia* Exclusion Program Framework in June 2024—a major milestone in protecting U.S. agriculture from one of the most dangerous plant pathogens: *Ralstonia solanacearum* race 3 biovar 2. This select agent threatens crops like tomatoes, potatoes, and eggplants, and past incursions in 2020 through 2023 exposed critical vulnerabilities in our safeguarding system. The team tackled these challenges head-on, updating outdated protocols from 2007 and creating a scientifically robust, enforceable framework that closes technical gaps and strengthens international accountability. Among their impressive achievements:

- Doubling mandatory testing rates from 1 in 50,000 to 1 in 25,000 plants.
- Mandating semi-annual water testing for Rs R3bv2.
- Formalizing government-to-government agreements with NPPOs, ensuring local oversight and full compliance.

Their efforts have already delivered results—APHIS finalized the first-ever Operational Work Plan with Mexico, moving from a fragmented system to a modern, proactive program. This work exemplifies innovation, collaboration, and safeguarding at the highest level.

Team Members

Shelah Morita	Karelyn Cruz	Kara Spofford
Catherine Katsar	Marla Cazier	Nancy Osterbauer
Maria Acevedo-Sanchez	Gem Santillana	Aaron Kennedy
Shilaja Rabindran	Sylvia Shadman-Adolpho	Jose Hernandez
Ramesh Pokarel	M. Wilfredo Taboas	Lynn Evans-Goldner
Yilmaz Balci	Eric Newberry	Vessela Mavrodieva
John Bienapfl	Erin Stiers	