

Conference Abstract

This Old Herbarium: APHIS Compliance and Renovation Planning

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Abstract

With the continuous evolution of permitting regulations the Department of Botany at the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) in Washington D.C., invited an agent from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to discuss requirements for obtaining import permits for plant specimens. This meeting lead to the planning of restructuring existing procedures, workflows and modifications to the physical workspaces within our facilities. It also prompted the collection management staff to be well versed in the current regulations.

APHIS requires individuals applying for a permit to submit a Standard Operational Procedure document (SOP) of their facilities. The APHIS agent will review the sterile entry procedures in the SOP and determine if the facility qualifies. Before we drafted our final SOP, we researched SOPs from other APHIS compliant herbaria.

Most of the facilities at NMNH, constructed in 1910 and 1965, predates climate control and pest management best practice standards. After meeting with the APHIS agent, we reevaluated our packing and unpacking procedures. It was apparent that the frontline to combat pests should be as close to the shipping office entry point as possible. The ideal room is our drying room located next to the shipping office. Other room renovations where specimen processing occurs will be discussed in detail. PowerPoint is a major tool that helped with the visualization of the renovations. However, modifying and renovating spaces

within the museum is not an easy feat because of the large scale coordinating efforts within the institution.

Beyond the physical changes, there has been unexpected changes as to the role of collection staff in the permitting process. The APHIS requirements have created new challenges. Collection management staff are now sources of information about what collectors need to know before applying for a permit. Collection staff must also know about the various tools available for answering collectors' questions, such as being well versed in the USDA Phytosanitary export database (PExD). Overall, new restrictions and guild lines create unexpected changes for the overall form and function of collection management.

Keywords

APHIS compliance, phytosanitary permits, remodeling, workflows

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