

For Immediate Release

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**U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council Seeks Nominees
for State Member Positions**

April 19, 2004- Members of the highbush (cultivated) blueberry industry are now seeking nominees to fill U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council (USHBC) state member and alternate positions on the Blueberry Promotion, Research and Information Order. The nomination period will begin on May 3, 2004. Current USHBC state member and alternate terms for the top five production states of Michigan, New Jersey, Oregon, North Carolina and Georgia will expire on December 31, 2004.

Potential nominees are required to complete a USHBC nomination application and forward their application on to the USHBC office by no later than June 7, 2004. Nominations are to be received directly from growers in Michigan, North Carolina and Georgia. Nominations for the final two state positions, New Jersey and Oregon, will be completed by their respective state blueberry council and commission.

Nomination applications will be mailed directly to growers in Michigan, North Carolina and Georgia. Applications are also available on line at the USHBC website www.ushbc.org, or can be requested by contacting the USHBC office by phone at (916) 983-0111 or by fax at (916) 983-9022. Eligible producer nominees are those who produced 2,000 pounds or more of highbush (cultivated) blueberries in the United States during the period of January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003.

Once the nomination period is closed, a ballot will be prepared listing all nominees by state. Ballots will then be mailed to growers in Michigan, North Carolina and Georgia on August 2, 2004. The voting period will be open for 35 days and close on September 6, 2004.

Those receiving the most votes for each producer seat will be recommended to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture as council members. Those who earn the second most votes for each position will be recommended as the alternate. The names of those who receive the third and fourth most votes will be sent on to the Secretary for consideration as well. Council members and alternates will serve a term of three years beginning January 1, 2005. Members can serve for a maximum of two consecutive terms.

The USHBC has adopted a diversity outreach plan to attempt to achieve a diverse representation on the Council. USHBC programs are open to all individuals without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation and marital or family

status. It is USHBC policy that membership on the Council and its committees reflect the diversity of individuals served by its programs.

To accomplish this objective, the USHBC will strive to attain representation of growers and other industry participants from diverse backgrounds on the Council and USHBC committees. To this end, the USHBC strongly encourages women, minorities and persons with disabilities to seek nominations to the USHBC and to participate in Council and USHBC committee activities.

Producers and importers of highbush blueberries approved the establishment of the USHBC through a referendum conducted by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service in the year 2000. In this referendum 67.8 percent of those who voted favored implementation of the order. Those who voted in favor represented 73.2 percent of the volume of highbush blueberries represented in the referendum.

The USHBC program was formally established in August of 2000. The program is funded by an assessment of \$12 per ton on domestic highbush (cultivated) blueberries and \$12 per ton on fresh and processed imported cultivated blueberries. Market promotion activities funded through the USHBC program began in January of 2002.