

For Immediate Release

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

January 4, 2012- The U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council (USHBC) is seeking nominees to fill Regional Member and Alternate positions. The nomination period will begin on January 13, 2012. Current USHBC Regional Member and Alternate terms for the Western, Midwest, Northeast and Southern regions will expire on December 31, 2012.

Potential nominees are required to complete a USHBC nomination application and forward their application on to the USHBC office no later than February 17, 2012. Nominations are to be received directly from growers in each of the four regions. Nomination applications will be mailed directly to growers throughout the United States. Applications are also available on line at the USHBC website www.blueberry.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, 2011 to December 31, 2011.

Once the nomination period is closed, a ballot will be prepared for each region listing all nominees for that specific region. Regional ballots will then be mailed to growers on April 20, 2012. The voting period will be open for 35 days and close on May 25, 2012.

Those receiving the most votes for each producer seat will be recommended to the Secretary of Agriculture as Regional Council Members. Those who earn the second most votes for each position will be recommended as the Regional 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, 2013. 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, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, genetic information, parental status, 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. Results of this referendum, announced on July 13, 2000, showed that 68% of those who voted favored implementation of the Blueberry Promotion, Research and Information Order. Those who voted in favor represented 73% of the volume of cultivated blueberries represented in the referendum.

As required every five years by the USDA, a continuation referendum on the USHBC was conducted in 2006 with the Council receiving a strong endorsement from the industry. Results from the 2006 referendum show that 87% of those who voted favored continuation of the order. Those who voted in favor represented 94% of the volume of cultivated blueberries represented in the referendum.

A second continuation referendum was conducted in 2011 with the Council again receiving a strong endorsement from the industry. Results from the 2011 referendum show that 88% of those who voted favored continuation of the order. Those who voted in favor represented 98% of the volume of cultivated 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.