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California

Beekeepers removing hives as almond blossom winds down

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

CHICO, Calif. — A quick and vibrant almond blossom in California is winding down, prompting beekeepers to remove hives as growers anticipate an abundant nut set.

Warm and balmy afternoons in mid- to late February facilitated lots of bee activity while making the blossom proceed more quickly, noted Bob Curtis, the Almond Board of California's director of agricultural affairs.

Now that even the latest varieties such as Butte and Padre almonds are in petal fall, some hives have been moved to stone fruit orchards as the early varieties of those crops have started to bloom, reports the National Agricultural Statistics Service office in Sacramento.

"We had in essence about two weeks rather than three



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Bee boxes are deployed in an almond orchard at the California State University-Chico farm in the middle of blossom in mid-February.

weeks" of full blossom, Curtis said. "During the daytime, there were plenty of bee flight hours. ... The other plus with this bloom is that we did have very good overlap of cross-compatible varieties."

Under best-management practices the group developed in 2014, the almond board has been urging beekeepers to remove their hives when most of their latest variety is in petal

fall to avoid having bees fly elsewhere to forage — and coming in contact with pesticides applied to other crops.

"They can fly up to four miles," Curtis said, adding that some growers are applying chemicals to tree fruit crops and alfalfa.

The precautions come after bee producers suffered devastating losses at the end of the almond blossom two years ago, when a mixture of fungicides used by almond growers and insecticides applied to field crops proved harmful to both adult bees and broods.

This year's blossom followed another tough winter for beekeepers in terms of honey bee die-offs, with some reporting significant losses. Several factors have been blamed for the latest deaths, including signs that the varroa mite believed to cause many of the deaths is developing a resis-

tance to treatments against it.

Bee activity during the blossom was monitored closely by researchers from the nationwide Bee Informed Partnership, whose aim is to help beekeepers improve the strength of their hives, the California Farm Bureau Federation reported.

So far, the feedback from many beekeepers to the almond board has been positive, Curtis said. Beekeepers are pleased with what they call their brood increase — the egg-laying and development of immature bees in hives — during the blossom, he said.

Depending on the weather this spring and summer, the quick and early blossom could portend another early harvest. In 2015, many growers were wrapping up their harvest by Labor Day after a warm spring and summer helped accelerate the crop's development.

Meeting to raise citrus psyllid awareness in Northern Calif.

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

AUBURN, Calif. — While much attention has been paid to grappling with Asian citrus psyllids in the San Joaquin Valley, a meeting on March 22 will explore the pest's potential ramifications for Northern California growers.

The state Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Program will hold an afternoon workshop at a community center in Auburn to advise the industry how to protect mountain mandarins and other citrus fruit from the encroaching threat of the psyllid, which can carry the tree-killing disease huanglongbing.

The workshop will emphasize such precautions as inspecting vehicles that come from affected areas for "hitchhiking" psyllids and brushing off all equipment and clothing when leaving groves, organizers say.

"It's a proactive meeting," said Jessica Northrup,



Courtesy of USDAARS

An adult Asian citrus psyllid is shown on a young citrus leaf.

an outreach coordinator for the grower assessment-funded state program. "A psyllid has not been found in that region, but we want to make sure if that happens that they know the best practices out in the field."

The workshop comes as California's Asian citrus psyllid quarantine keeps growing and now covers nearly one-third of the state's total land mass. First discovered in Southern California, psyllids are known to have migrated as far north as San Joaquin County and the San Francisco Bay area.

For PacifiCorp, separate dam removal entity less costly, risky

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

For PacifiCorp, setting up a separate entity to handle the removal of four dams from the Klamath River would be cheaper and less risky for ratepayers than other options, the company's spokesman says.

The revised Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement — under which a "non-federal entity" would apply to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to decommission the dams —

caps the company's costs at \$200 million, spokesman Bob Gravely said.

By contrast, relicensing the dams and keeping them operating would cost more than \$400 million just for improvements such as fish ladders, plus any other costs for measures imposed by the California Water Resources Control Board to obtain Clean Water Act permits, he said. Environmental groups would likely challenge the relicensing application in court, he said.

For PacifiCorp to simply

handle the decommissioning itself would cost about \$292 million, according to government estimates. The third-party entity would enable PacifiCorp to cap its costs while assuming liability and responsibility for the facilities' removal, Gravely said in an email.

"So we have certainty in terms of cost and risk," he said, "and have concluded that the KHSA is both less costly and less risky than relicensing under our known terms and conditions or pursuing removal on our own."

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