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California

Citrus pest program continues with widespread support

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — Armed with \$10 million from the state and buoyed by overwhelming grower support, California's Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Program has been given the go-ahead to continue its work.

The state Department of Food and Agriculture decided to forgo a referendum and continue the program after a series of meetings with growers, whose assessment of 9 cents per 40-pound carton funds its efforts.

Established in 2009, the program seeks to limit the spread of the Asian citrus psyllid and huanglongbing, the deadly tree disease the pest can carry.

"We're very happy the CDFA decided to forgo an official referendum and just continue along with the program that we're already doing," said Alyssa Houtby, spokeswoman for the 2,500-member California Citrus Mutual. "We already have HLB in Riverside County, so the issue is certainly expanding."

"This program we have in place is the reason we found



Courtesy of UCANR

Joanne O'Sullivan, who was hired by the University of California to scout orchards for signs of the Asian citrus psyllid, looks at new leaves that she pulled from a tree. Asian citrus psyllids like the new flush of growth.

the disease and have been able to keep the disease from spreading as quickly as it did in Florida and Texas," Houtby said.

The decision comes as Gov. Jerry Brown signed a budget in early July that includes \$10 million from the general fund to attack the psyllid and huanglongbing, which is also known as citrus greening. The budget also included \$5 million to com-

bat the glassy-winged sharpshooter, which affects a variety of crops.

The allocation follows legislation this year that will enable the citrus industry to increase its 9-cent assessment. A committee will decide this fall how much the assessment will be raised.

As it is, the assessment generates between \$15 million and \$18 million a year depending on crop sizes. It's

matched by nearly \$11 million in federal funds. The bill by state Sen. Cathleen Galgiani, D-Stockton, will allow for another \$9.6 million in grower assessments to be spent by the CDFA for psyllid control.

Growers have invested more than \$100 million into the Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Program since 2009, according to Citrus Mutual.

Most of that money has

gone to trapping, treatments and surveys in urban areas to stop the spread of the psyllid and HLB.

While it does not harm humans, huanglongbing is fatal for citrus trees and has no cure. The disease has been detected in more than 70 citrus trees in Southern California urban areas, but the disease has not yet migrated into the Golden State's commercial groves.

First discovered in the United States in 2005, huanglongbing has devastated the citrus industry in Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina and Texas, causing an average loss of 7,513 jobs per year and costing growers nearly \$3 billion in revenue, the University of Florida has estimated.

The USDA has spent more than \$400 million since 2009 to address the disease. California's citrus industry has devoted \$15 million toward HLB research and education, including \$8 million from the grower-funded California Citrus Research Foundation to construct a biosecurity-level 3 lab near the University of California-Riverside that should be operational this fall.

For its part, the UC has hired and trained four "scouts"

to carefully roam citrus orchards looking for signs of the psyllid. The scouts examine newly emerging leaves and tap branches to bat pests onto a clipboard.

The scouting project aims to avoid a repeat of what happened in Florida, where the pest was left unchecked when it first invaded citrus growing regions and swept through the state, UC entomology specialist Beth Grafton-Cardwell said.

"Early-detection technology have been a research priority for California for quite a while," Citrus Mutual's Houtby said.

With just six months of data, the monitoring program has already yielded important information about the psyllid, UC officials said. For instance, the scouts are finding more psyllids on the borders than in the centers of orchards, meaning growers may only have to spray the borders of a grove at certain times of the year or when populations are low.

The effort is funded by a \$1.45 million multi-agency grant coordinated by the USDA, university officials said.

State to draw down Lake Oroville to accommodate dam work

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press

OROVILLE, Calif. — A move to draw down Lake Oroville this fall to accommodate rebuilding of the dam won't immediately affect water contractors, officials said.

The state Department of Water Resources plans to take the lake's surface down to below 700 feet elevation this fall to ensure safety for workers fixing the dam, said Erin Mellon, a project spokeswoman.

That's lower than the lake's normal mid-autumn levels, she

said, and lower than the lake's current surface level of 800 feet. Weather permitting, draining the lake will enable crews to work past Nov. 1, which was their self-imposed deadline for getting the dam's spillways ready for next winter's rain and runoff, she said.

The state will be able to meet all of its water obligations this year, said Joel Ledesma, the State Water Project's deputy director.

However, next year's deliveries remain to be seen, he said.

"We'll be waiting for next winter's snowpack and weath-

er to come in," Ledesma said during a conference call with reporters. "Then we can determine what the allocations are."

While crews are making plans to work into the winter, Mellon insists the project hasn't fallen behind schedule.

"We are still on schedule to build what we've committed to by Nov. 1, to make sure we can handle those flows coming in for the winter season," she said.

Their remarks came during a progress report on the \$275.4 million effort to repair and rebuild the nation's tallest dam, whose spillways nearly failed

in February.

The DWR's final 2017 construction plan won approval in mid-July from the California Division of Safety and Dams and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, meaning this year's work has gained all of the required approvals from federal, state and independent oversight groups, officials said.

This summer's first phase includes removing and rebuilding 2,270 feet of the main spillway, temporarily fixing the top portion of the main spillway that connects to the

radial gates, and building an underground cutoff wall below the emergency spillway to prevent erosion if it is used again.

Next year's work is slated to include adding structural concrete to the entire main spillway, resurfacing and hydro-blasting energy dissipators at the base of the spillway and building a roller-compacted concrete wall and splashpad on the emergency spillway to dissipate the force of rushing water, officials said. The work in 2018 will also need federal and state approval.

Lake Oroville is the main

reservoir for the State Water Project, which irrigates more than 600,000 acres of Central Valley farmland and serves 20 million urban customers in the San Francisco Bay area and Southern California.

Spillway ruptures in February led to the two-day evacuation of about 188,000 area residents and threatened a large portion of the Eastern Sacramento Valley's \$1.5 billion agriculture industry, including rice and tree crops and several processors along the Highway 99 corridor between Chico and Yuba City.



Courtesy Fresno Food Expo

Tioga-Sequoia Brewing Co.'s Half Dome California Wheat beer was given the Buyers Choice Award at the annual Fresno Food Expo July 26.

Producers honored at Fresno Food Expo's New Products Awards

FRESNO, Calif. — Beer, olive oil and a French pastry were among the favorites of judges at the annual Fresno Food Expo's New Product Awards.

The awards highlight new creations by producers in the eight-county San Joaquin Valley.

Fresno-based Tioga Sequoia Brewing Co.'s wheat beer, Half Dome California Wheat, was presented with the Buyers' Choice Award. It bested runner-up ENZO Olive Oil's ENZO Fresno Chili Crush and third-place finisher Busseto Foods' California Party-Pack Wine Trail Edition.

The People's Choice award went to The Brioche Lady of Clovis, Calif., for its purple yam brioche, a French pastry bread, and ENZO Olive Oil was given the Fred Ruiz Entrepreneurial Award.

The awards kicked off the seventh annual food expo July 26-27 at the Fresno Convention Center. The winners were chosen from among 28 products, varietals and packaging concepts entered by 26 businesses, organizers said.

The People's Choice Award, determined by online voting, generated 2,621 votes via Facebook and the Fresno Food Expo website during the July 13-20 voting period.

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