

## ***California Department of Food & Agriculture***

### **Minutes**

of the Meeting of the Pierce's Disease and Glassy-winged Sharpshooter Board  
and Pierce's Disease Advisory Task Force

Held on Monday, November 4, 2024.

Physical Location:

Trinchero Family Estates Building  
501 Hopkins Rd, Davis, CA 95616 and via  
Web-conference and Teleconference.

### **PD/GWSS BOARD**

Members Present: Jeff Bitter\*, William Drayton\*, Rich Hammond, John "JD" Harkey\*, Randy Heinzen, Kendall Hoxsey-Onysko\*, Trey Irwin, Aaron Lange\*, Jim Ledbetter, Steve McIntyre, Dominic Rossini, Seth Schwebs\*, Dave Teuschler

Members Absent: Greg Coleman, Bill Hammond

### **PD ADVISORY TASK FORCE**

Members Present: Tracy Cleveland\*, Casey Creamer\*, Ha Dang\*, Kristin Lowe, Todd Sanders\*, Beth Stone-Smith\*, Judy Zaninovich\*

Members Absent: Chris Bowland, Glenn Fankhauser, Martin Mochizuki

### **OTHER ATTENDEES**

Buddhi Achhami\*, Maher Al Rwahnih, Chasika Bandna, Noelle Cremers, Josphe Damiano, Leah Gayagas\*, Adriaan Gilis, Mark Harrington\*, Matt Kaiser, Giancarlo LaGiusa, Neil McRoberts\*, Michael Miiller\*, David Morgan\*, Dylan Morris, Warren Nichols\*, Stacie Oswalt, Robin Schoen\*, Nicole Shorter, Youngsoo Son\*, Sean Veling, Myrna Villegas

\*Denotes attendance via web conference or teleconference.

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### **CALL TO ORDER**

PD/GWSS Board Chairperson Randy Heinzen and PD Advisory Task Force Chairperson Kristin Lowe called the joint meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

### **ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS**

PDCP Statewide Coordinator Joseph Damiano conducted the roll call for the PD/GWSS Board (Board) and the PD Advisory Task Force (Task Force). Quorums were present for both the Board and the Task Force.

### **WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS**

Randy Heinzen and Kristin Lowe welcomed everyone to the November meeting.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Randy Heinzen asked the Board for a motion to approve the minutes from the joint Board and Task Force meeting held on June 24, 2024.

- It was moved, seconded, and unanimously passed by the Board to approve the minutes from the joint Board and Task Force meeting held on June 24, 2024.

#### Details of Board Vote

Motion: Dominic Rossini    Second: Trey Irwin  
In Favor: Bitter, Drayton, Rich Hammond, Harkey, Heinzen, Hoxsey-Onysko, Irwin, Lange, McIntyre, Rossini, Schwebs, Teuschler  
Against: None  
Abstain: None  
Absent: Greg Coleman, Bill Hammond, Jim Ledbetter\*\*

\*\*Not present for this action item.

Kristin Lowe asked the Task Force for a motion to approve the minutes from the joint Board and Task Force meeting held on June 24, 2024.

- It was moved, seconded, and passed by the Task Force to approve the minutes from the joint Board and Task Force meeting held on June 24, 2024.

#### Details of Task Force Vote

Motion: Beth Stone-Smith    Second: Judy Zaninovich  
In Favor: Lowe, Sanders, Stone-Smith, Zaninovich  
Against: None  
Abstain: Cleveland, Dang  
Absent: Bowland, Creamer\*\*, Fankhauser, Mochizuki

\*\*Not present for this action item.

### **NEXT MEETINGS**

The next Board and Task Force meeting was set for Thursday, January 30, 2025, at CDFA Headquarters to begin at 10:00 AM.

### **APPOINTMENT OF NOMINATION COMMITTEE, IF DESIRED**

Randy Heinzen opened up the topic by asking current officers and the Board if there was interest in continuing to keep 2-year terms for Board officers, which the Board agreed to continue. No committee was appointed.

### **PDCP AND STATE BUDGET UPDATES**

Joseph Damiano of PDCP provided an update regarding the program's current funding and ongoing budget concerns. PDCP's current federal funding of \$15.5 million for fiscal year 2025 had remained unchanged despite increasing operational costs. Damiano stated that PDCP would require over \$20 million to fund the program fully and plan for the future, or around \$17.5 million if recent existing cuts were maintained, still leaving a shortfall of \$1.5-2 million. Remedies for these deficits included potential program budget cuts including reductions to the Area-wide Program trapping activities which could save approximately \$800,000. Reductions to the Area-wide Program would include number of traps, trap servicing intervals, and the reduction of PDCP trapping staff hours, which would also decrease overhead and infrastructure costs, along with vehicle and

transportation costs. Additional details on these changes would be discussed later in the meeting and further updates would be prepared for the January meeting. Any additional costs needed to balance the budget would have to come from additional program cuts. Damiano stated that communications continued with County Agricultural Commissioners, and that cuts to detection and inspection activities that prevent GWSS from moving within the state would be avoided if possible. Tracy Cleveland of Napa County noted that counties were experiencing cuts in other programs as well, and that budget discussions were ongoing.

Damiano also reported that the State asked all state agencies to reduce overall budgets by 8%, but this did not apply to PDCP as the program does not receive general fund money. A small number of vacant positions in the program had been transferred to other programs since no funding was available to fill them.

Todd Sanders added that lobbying efforts were ongoing to secure additional funding through appropriations and the next federal farm bill, and that there would need to be coordination between wine and table grape groups. Jeff Bitter also reiterated the importance of trying to secure increased funding for the program from government sources.

## **FISCAL UPDATES**

Beth Stone-Smith of the USDA provided a fiscal update regarding the status of the federal budget. Federal fiscal year 2024 ended on September 30, with funding delays as the federal budget was signed in March and the full allocation was received only in June. Fiscal year 2025 started on October 1, and the government was operating under a continuing resolution until December 20, allowing expenditures of about 22% of last year's funding level. Expectations for fiscal year 2025 included flat budgets, with an anticipated \$15.5 million for CDFA. Stone-Smith added that a 2% pay raise for federal employees in fiscal year 2025 would need to be absorbed internally by USDA otherwise it would come out of the cooperative agreement budget for CDFA. The situation was uncertain due to the early stage of the fiscal year 2025 budget process and the election year.

Myrna Villegas of PDCP provided an overview of the program operations fiscal display, covering the prior state fiscal year 2023-24 and the current fiscal year 2024-25. Actual expenses for fiscal year 2023-24 amounted to \$18.6 million which consisted of \$1.8 million of Board funds and \$16.8 million of other funds. For fiscal year 2024-25, the budget included \$3.3 million of Board funds and \$16.3 million of other funds, totaling \$19.6 million. Year-to-date expenditures were \$2.3 million with Board funds at \$163,000 and other funds at \$2.1 million.

Matt Kaiser of PDCP gave an overview of the fiscal status of Board Funds. The previous fiscal year 2023-24 revenue totaled about \$5.5 million and expenses totaled about \$4.8 million pending future adjustments, with a net balance of approximately \$9 million carried over into the current year. The projected revenue for the current year totaled \$4.7 million and was based on maintaining the assessment rate at \$1.25 with a potential 15% decrease in crop value. Total projected expenditures for fiscal year 2024-25 were \$6.4 million. Future fiscal year obligations included multi-year research projects, the contract for outreach through June 2026, research coordinator contract through 2027, and nursery treatments approved through June 2026. The projected balance after accounting for future obligations was just under \$5.8 million, aligning with the Board's

target of around \$5 million.

Kaiser then provided a brief overview of various line items and their status. Expenditure details included research as well as an economic study from UC Davis and virus study from the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) both of which were expected to be completed around January 2025 but were encumbered in the prior year. RFP Assistance and website services for grant proposals have been under budget in prior years but would likely be over this year and would be discussed in the next item. Urban and Nursery Treatments were ongoing, with some invoices pending. The PDCP Public Outreach Contract was in its second year, with additional costs for outreach printing related to the 25th anniversary of the program expected. County delimitation expenses were expected due to multiple recent delimitations.

### **RESEARCH PROGRAM UPDATE, ANNUAL RFP, AND GRANTS WEBSITE FUNDING**

Matt Kaiser provided a brief update regarding the status of RFP Assistance and the current grant facilitation software. The Department planned to end its license for the current platform being used, prompting the need for alternatives, and Foundation Plant Services (FPS) had been contacted to manage the Board's grant solicitation process again as they had for many years before 2022. The proposed budget for this transition was \$37,384, higher than the initially budgeted \$20,000, and did not include the costs of lingering charges from the old platform and CDFA's grants coordinator. Noelle Cremers from Wine Institute asked if the program had considered other alternatives. Kris Lowe outlined the benefits of the Unified Grant Management website including coordination with other similar funding organizations, and provided more information about how the site had been updated and supported by American Vineyard Foundation and Oregon Wine Board since the PD/GWSS Board had left in 2022. The Unified Grant Management website was considered more user-friendly compared to CDFA's current platform, and the transition was seen as necessary due to the lack of viable alternatives and short timeline. Randy Heinzen asked the Board for a motion to approve increasing the RFP Assistance line item from \$20,000 to \$50,000 for the current year.

- It was moved, seconded, and unanimously passed by the Board to approve the increase the budget line item to \$50,000 for RFP Assistance.

#### **Details of Board Vote**

Motion: Steve McIntyre                      Second: Rich Hammond

In Favor: Bitter, Drayton, Rich Hammond, Harkey, Heinzen, Hoxsey-Onysko,  
Irwin, Lange, Ledbetter, McIntyre, Rossini, Schwebs, Teuschler

Against: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Coleman, Bill Hammond

Kaiser concluded by summarizing plans to incorporate guidance from the National Academy of Sciences report in future RFPs, recently published research funded by the Board regarding PD spread, and preliminary data associated with a Board-funded project suggesting spotted lanternfly might be able to vector PD. Industry support letters had also been written for two groups applying to the USDA Specialty Crop Research Initiative program, one regarding identification of lesser-known sharpshooters and the other regarding CRISPR gene-editing in GWSS to block PD spread.

## **FPS GREENHOUSE UPDATE: OUT OF CYCLE FOUNDATION PROPOGATION AND VIRUS TESTING PROPOSAL**

Maher Al Rwahnih, Director of Foundation Plant Services (FPS), provided a detailed update on the greenhouse construction projects including proposals for additional funding as well as an update on FPS virus testing. Regarding virus testing, Al Rwahnih summarized current protocols by which all foundation vines are tested annually for red blotch virus and leafroll associated virus 3 (leafroll-3). In 2024, an infected vine was detected with leafroll-3, which was asymptomatic and immediately removed. The infected vine was detected early, and the plant was quarantined with subsequent tests on surrounding plants and budwood collected the previous year being negative. This detection was the first occurrence of leafroll-3 in the classic foundation.

Regarding greenhouses, Al Rwahnih summarized Phase 1 including greenhouse construction that was completed within one year with about \$5 million in funding primarily from the California Fruit Tree, Nut Tree, And Grapevine Improvement Advisory Board (IAB) and other sources plus some FPS funds. Nearly 1,200 vines had been secured in the greenhouse, with strict protocols for entry and testing ongoing. A 2nd phase of greenhouse construction was planned, estimated to cost \$3.6 million. Funding for Phase 2 was being sought from private industry and government sources, with a \$360,000 matching fund from John Dyson. IAB funding had decreased, due to declining nursery sales, from 100% to 78%, with a projection of 50% in the future. Efforts were being made to secure alternative funding sources and increase FPS fees starting in 2024.

Al Rwahnih stated that they were seeking \$679,154 in funding from the Board for another three years of propagation and testing for the foundation greenhouse collection, following a similar request three years prior. The request was coming outside the regular RFP cycle due to urgent need to maintain staffing, and these funds would not be used for additional construction of greenhouses.

After discussion, there was consensus amongst the Board that this out-of-cycle proposal did have merit and that FPS's work was critical for the industry but there were concerns about the Board's current budget outlook and whether additional costs were feasible. Several Board members requested additional information from the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) virus report before deciding on the proposal, which should be available before Spring 2025. Al Rwahnih confirmed that FPS would be able to maintain operations at least until late spring with their current funding. No motion for the approval of the proposal was made.

## **RESEARCH COORDINATOR AND NAS UPDATE**

Pierce's Disease Advisory Task Force Chairperson and Research Coordinator, Kristin Lowe, provided an update about the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) virus project. The NAS committee was making revisions before the final report could be released with pre-publication copy expected in early December. The current RFP was going out on December 1 and had been improved the prior year based on the first half of the NAS project.

Lowe also reported on her visit to the Hopland research and extension station, where Rodrigo Almeida conducted a long-term field study on inoculating 14 different varieties of grape vines with interesting findings being observed. The project was wrapping up that year and Kris suggested that Akif Eskalen of UC Davis who had been working on

field trials for potential PD treatments with promising results may take over the Hopland site for additional studies on sick vines. Lowe concluded by outlining her plans to try to summarize regulations surrounding the future implementation of CRISPR gene editing and RNAi and other molecular approaches.

### **GROWER VOTE AND OUTREACH AND EDUCATION UPDATE**

Nicole Shorter of Brown-Miller Communications provided an update on current grower outreach and the upcoming vote for reauthorization of the program. A grower survey was currently live, and findings would be shared at the January 2025 meeting. Growers were encouraged to take the survey online, taking less than 10 minutes, and participants would be asked to promote the survey to colleagues and other associations. Postcards and speaking points had been prepared for distribution along with content from the newsletter and emails to promote the survey. Shorter also confirmed that for those unable to join in person, arrangements could be made to send promotional materials directly. Regional grower associations would be contacted to promote the survey to their members. Regarding the grower vote, Jim Ledbetter stressed the importance of ensuring the list of eligible voters was accurate, and Michael Miiller from California Association of Winegrape Growers outlined plans to distribute an FAQ document to address voter questions.

Shorter also reported a historical timeline had been completed and was available on the website. A 25-year anniversary postcard thanking growers and highlighting the program's impact would be mailed in March 2025. Future plans included writing guest articles, pitching media, and speaking on podcasts to increase visibility. Participation in trade shows in Turlock and Santa Rosa was planned. The draft newsletter and accompanying postcard included articles on various topics and would be distributed to 7,000 stakeholders. Media coverage included topics like the spotted lanternfly and Board-funded research projects. Social media campaigns had reached over 748,000 people with significant engagement.

### **PDCP RAPID RESPONSE, DELIMITATION, AND NURSERY UPDATES**

Stacie Oswalt of PDCP provided an update on rapid response, delimitation surveys, and nursery program activities conducted during 2024. In Solano County, the GWSS eradication effort continued to show decreased GWSS activity in the Vacaville project area with only five GWSS adults found year to date. Treatments had been conducted on 842 properties and over 6,500 biocontrol wasps had been released. In August, a new GWSS infestation was detected in the city of Turlock in Stanislaus County. As of October 28, 63 adults, three nymphs, and one viable egg mass had been detected. The County was overseeing treatments on residential and commercial properties in the project area, with 68 properties completed. Approximately 1,900 biocontrol wasps had been released in Turlock. In El Dorado County, a new infestation was detected in October in the city of El Dorado Hills. As of October 28, 17 GWSS had been detected. Visual survey and delimitation trapping continues in the area to determine the extent of the infestation. A total of 420 biocontrol wasps had been released in El Dorado County. Urban residential treatments in Fresno, Madera and Tulare Counties were ongoing. Aaron Lange asked if there were any clues as to the sources of the new infestations. Oswalt described host plants in the area and outlined how residents moving plants outside of the regulated nursery pathways is a risk.

Additional delimitations were also conducted in Kern and Kings Counties. In Kern County, an infestation was discovered in the city of Delano. PDCP and Kern County

would incorporate Delano into the existing infested area boundaries. In Kings County, one cropland and one urban delimitation concluded with no infestation detected.

Oswalt also provided an update on the nursery program. High-risk nursery delimitations had occurred this year in Contra Costa, Placer, and Sacramento Counties. Three delimitations were completed in Contra Costa County at unique nursery sites without infestations detected while Placer and Sacramento Counties each have one ongoing nursery delimitation. From January 1, 2024, to September 30, 2024, there were 24,560 nursery stock shipments from the GWSS infested areas to non-infested areas of the state. Five viable GWSS life stages were found during this timeframe by destination county inspectors during incoming nursery stock inspections, resulting in Notices of Rejection. A total of 89 egg masses, four nymphs and 18 adults were found by origin county inspectors on the loading docks during outgoing inspections of plant material. During the same timeframe, there were 5,072 Approved Treatment Program (ATP) shipments consisting of approximately 1.15 million plants. No regulatory actions had been taken year to date against any ATP nurseries for viable life stages.

### **AREA-WIDE PROGRAM UPDATE**

Joseph Damiano of PDCP provided an update addressing a budget shortfall and its anticipated effects to the Area-wide Program. The budget shortfall as introduced earlier necessitated cost reductions including approximately \$800,000 to be cut from the area-wide program. Historically, treatments occurred in both fall and spring but for several years due to funding availability, treatments were only planned for fall (end of September to November). Previously year-round trapping efforts were now proposed to run from May through September to align with treatment schedules. A proposed 40% reduction in the number of traps with a shift from trapping grapes within a quarter mile of citrus to trapping citrus within a quarter mile of grapes was expected to further decrease staff hours and costs. Damiano stated that the overall aim was to maintain sufficient data for treatment coordinators while simultaneously reducing costs. PDCP was continuing to coordinate with CDFA's Citrus program regarding trapping in the area as well.

In response to questions from Board members, Beth Stone-Smith of the USDA added that the data from trapping was crucial for determining fall treatments but spring trapping data was less critical due to biological cycle of the pest. The program had not had the budget for spring treatments for many years, making the current adjustments logical. Kern, Tulare, and Fresno were the primary areas for area-wide treatments, though Tulare had been reduced in recent years, while Madera was the northern edge of the GWSS infested area.. Future trapping reductions were likely to focus on Tulare and Kern counties. The program had been operating without state funding for about 12 years, except for a one-time allocation in 2017 which did not go to the Area-wide Program. The history of the General Beale area, where the Area-wide Program started, was also discussed.

Stone-Smith then provided an update regarding the current status of the area- wide program. The discussion included budget constraints, treatment prioritization, and the impact of federal budget processes on treatment timing. The overall limited federal budget had forced the Program to prioritize grape protection over widespread treatment and eradication. Focus had also shifted to areas outside infested boundary lines and those with high population levels. The ongoing Federal budget processes had created a lot of uncertainty in treatment funding and timing.

Stone-Smith also stated that the expansion of organic citrus areas complicates treatment efforts due to limited treatment options and increased sharpshooter populations. Judy Zaninovich added context for the situation in Tulare and northern Kern Counties. The discussion touched on how economic challenges for farmers might affect their pest management practices with certain farmers reducing pest management efforts due to economic constraints. Conventional products remained effective against glassy-winged sharpshooter, but organic treatments were less effective and more expensive. Aaron Lange asked about PD impacts to grape growers in areas with GWSS, to which Stone-Smith highlighted work by David Haviland verifying that high GWSS populations lead to increased PD problems the next year. The ensuing discussion, which included members and Neil McRoberts from University of California, Davis highlighted the importance of early outreach to grape growers to manage disease levels when PD is detected and GWSS is present.

### **BORDER PROTECTION STATION UPDATE**

Adriaan Gilis of CDFA Plant Health and Pest Prevention Services provided a presentation on the CDFA Border Stations. He outlined how the stations enforce Food and Agricultural Codes, federal, state, and county policies, inspect shipments for quarantine compliance, and provide consultations to industry and the public. Currently, there are 16 stations established in the 1920s, strategically placed along interstates and major highways. Some stations were in the process of relocating and updating facilities to better handle the volume of traffic and commodities. Natural barriers like the Sierra Nevada and help prevent pest entry, but inspections are crucial for items transported by motor vehicles. Gilis explained how inspections vary based on vehicle type and condition. Several examples of efforts to detect pests like the spotted lanternfly and spongy moth were given, as were statistics about the history of spotted lanternfly interceptions since 2021. Commercial vehicle inspections included checking bills of lading and routine inspections for agricultural commodities like produce and nursery stock. Suspect pest finds result in vehicles being refused entry until pests are identified and assessed. Cooperative activities that the stations do with other programs and agencies were highlighted. Questions were asked about the percent of finds versus undetected pests getting through especially with respect to fruit flies. Gilis noted that data was not immediately available but shared an anecdote of recent fruit fly finds in Mexican produce as an example of a recent border station interception.

### **OTHER ITEMS**

None.

### **CLOSING COMMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT**

Board Vice-chairperson Trey Irwin and Task Force Chairperson Kristin Lowe thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting at 1:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted on January 3, 2025, by  
Giancarlo LaGiusa, Associate Governmental Program Analyst  
Pierce's Disease Control Program  
California Department of Food and Agriculture