

## ***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 Tuesday, April 22, 2025.

Physical Location:

California Department of Food and Agriculture Auditorium  
1220 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 and via  
Web-conference and Teleconference.

### **PD/GWSS BOARD**

Members Present: Jeff Bitter\*, Greg Coleman\*, William Drayton\*, Rich Hammond\*,  
John "JD" Harkey\*, Randy Heinzen\*, Trey Irwin, Aaron Lange,  
Steve McIntyre, Dominic Rossini, Seth Schwebs\*, Dave  
Teuschler\*

Members Absent: Kendall Hoxsey-Onysko, Jim Ledbetter

### **PD ADVISORY TASK FORCE**

Members Present: Chris Bowland\*, Ha Dang\*, Kris Lowe, Martin Mochizuki\*, Todd  
Sanders\*, Beth Stone-Smith

Members Absent: Tracy Cleveland, Casey Creamer, Glenn Fankhauser, Judy Zaninovich

### **OTHER ATTENDEES**

John Aguirre, Ameer Atrash\*, Chasika Bandna, Cari Baughman\*, Michelle Borges\*,  
Jose Chang\*, Noelle Cremers, Joseph Damiano, Pete Downs\*, Leah Gayagas, Mark  
Harrington\*, Matthew Kaiser, Giancarlo LaGiusa, Melissa Lovett\*, Neil McRoberts\*,  
Michael Miiller, Dylan Morris, Warren Nichols\*, Stacie Oswalt, Michelle Pham, Linda  
Pinfold\*, Ted Reiger, Nicole Shorter\*, 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  
Kris Lowe called the joint meeting to order at 1:07 PM.

### **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**

Joseph Damiano of PDCP opened up the meeting by stating the ballots for the  
referendum have been mailed out to growers. Randy Heinzen and Kris Lowe thanked  
those in attendance for joining the meeting.

Damiano also stated that there two applications for the vacant PD/GWSS Board - North  
Coast producer/processor position were received. One candidate was John McCarthy  
with Far Niente, and the other being Cody Clark with Silverado Farming Company. The

applications were being evaluated and the goal was to have the position filled prior to the next meeting.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comments.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Randy Heinzen asked the Board for a motion to approve the minutes of the joint Board and Task Force meeting held on January 30, 2025.

- It was moved, seconded, and unanimously passed by the Board to approve the minutes from the joint Board and Task Force meeting held on January 30, 2025.

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

Motion: Dominic Rossini    Second: Trey Irwin

In Favor: Bitter, Coleman, Drayton, Harkey, Heinzen, Irwin, Lange, McIntyre, Rossini, Schwebs

Against: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Hammond\*\*, Hoxsey-Onysko, Ledbetter, Teuschler\*\*

\*\*Not present for this action item

Kris Lowe asked the Task Force for a motion to approve the minutes from the joint Board and Task Force meeting held on January 30, 2025.

- It was moved, seconded, and unanimously passed by the Task Force to approve the minutes from the joint Board and Task Force meeting held on January 30, 2025.

#### **Details of Task Force Vote**

Motion: Beth Stone-Smith    Second: Martin Mochizuki

In Favor: Bowland, Dang, Lowe, Mochizuki, Sanders, Stone-Smith

Against: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Cleveland, Creamer, Fankhauser, Zaninovich

### **NEXT MEETINGS**

The next Board and Task Force meeting was set for Tuesday, July 1, 2025 at 10:00 AM, at Foundation Plant Services Trincherro Family Estates Building located at UC Davis. The following meeting was tentatively set for November 5, 2025 at 10:00 AM.

### **FISCAL UPDATES**

Beth Stone-Smith of the USDA provided an update regarding the current state of federal funding. The discussion included fiscal updates and highlighted ongoing challenges, including the effects of early retirements, a deferred resignation program, reductions in labor force, administrative challenges, and budget allocations.. Stone-Smith mentioned effects on ports of entry and other commodity inspection points. There was uncertainty about what the final reduction in force plan would look like, and she reported that USDA has been operating with staffing deficits for years and recent retirements had exacerbated the situation. Budget-wise, the agency was operating under a full-year continuing

resolution at previous funding levels, with a 2% pay raise for employees. Final budget figures for specific appropriated projects, such as GWSS, were still pending USDA secretary approval. Michael Miiller of CAWG inquired about any new instructions or requirements related to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) or immigration at their operational level. Stone-Smith responded that there have been changes within USDA but that impacts to CDFA agreements were not expected.

Myrna Villegas of the PDCP provided a brief update on PDCP program expenses for prior state FY 2023-24 and the current FY 2024-25, including budgeted and actual board funds and other funds. For FY 2023-24, the total budgeted amount was \$18.7 million. For FY 2024-25, there were no changes to the budgeted amount which totaled \$20.2 million. Year-to-date totals for FY 2024-25 were \$12.2 million leaving a balance of \$7,990,000.

Matt Kaiser of the PDCP provided an update on year-to-date revenue and expenditures for Board funds. The revenue for the year 2024-25 was projected to be approximately \$4.4 million, with the majority of revenue already received. The balance carried over from last year was a little over \$8.94 million. Projected expenditures for the current year totaled \$6.4 million, with the projected balance at the end of the year at \$6.98 million. Kaiser provided updates on multi-year projects, including the outreach contract with Brown-Miller as well as ongoing research projects and the economic study that was recently completed. Printed copies of the National Academy of Sciences report on viruses had been published and were available. Other items included the cost of the referendum, urban rapid response treatments, and the \$850,000 for Contingency for County Backfill. Noelle Cremers of Wine Institute asked about the mechanics of the PD assessment collection process and potential impacts if the Grape Crush Report changed or stopped. Kaiser outlined that the PD assessment was collected as part of the Grape Crush process in collaboration with USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS), and that the current process was more efficient than if the program had to collect the PD Assessment independently from NASS.

## **PROGRAM OPERATIONS AND COUNTY CONTINGENCY FUNDING**

Joseph Damiano of the PDCP provided a brief update to ongoing PDCP operations and the effects of recent budget reductions. The budget for FY 2025-26 was being developed based on the current year's funding levels, with significant reductions and adjustments to achieve balance while acknowledging uncertainty about future funding. The FY 2025-26 budget would be balanced primarily by making substantial cuts to area-wide trapping activities, as previously discussed, and by reducing the amount that counties can request in their contracts by 3%. These measures would bring the budget very close to the required balance if federal funding remained flat but would leave little to no flexibility for unexpected expenses. Damiano proposed to increase the delimitation response contingency from the current \$100,000 to \$350,000 in the next year, which would be presented at the next meeting. This line was intended to provide discretionary resources to respond immediately to unexpected needs, such as additional delimitations for nurseries or treatments required due to finds or other urgent situations. The proposal to increase this line to a total of \$350,000 would give the program more flexibility to respond to unforeseen events, particularly those related to high-risk situations or urgent nursery treatments, ensuring the ability to react quickly without impacting the rest of the budget. The Contingency for County Backfill line plus Delimitation Response Contingency items had been budgeted at a total of \$1.5 million in recent years. In the current year, \$850,000 was allocated from the backfill line to avoid cuts to county contracts, and about \$43,000 used for nursery delimitations from the delimitation line. The new proposal would be to budget \$1.15 million for the backfill line plus \$350,000 available at program discretion for the delimitation response line which would probably be renamed for clarity. The adjustment would be made to align the budget more closely with actual spending patterns and to maintain some flexibility for unexpected expenses, while ensuring the budget remains balanced.

## **FOUNDATION PLANT SERVICES UPDATE**

Maher Al Rwahnih of Foundation Plant Services (FPS) provided an update regarding ongoing projects and a proposal submitted through the Board's RFP for three more years of virus testing and propagation work totaling \$693,003 over three years. Al Rwahnih outlined past accomplishments and future plans for the grape foundation greenhouse project. He also outlined FPS's funding sources including anticipated reductions due to slowed nursery sales and a pause placed on federal funds, and efforts to secure new revenue through donations and international sales. This proposal raised questions from members about whether the Board was an appropriate source for continued funding, while agreeing it was an important service to the wine and grape industry. Members reiterated to importance of the work but expressed concerned that continued funding may be outside the scope of the normal research funded by the Board. Discussion amongst members continued with many agreeing on the merits of FPS's work but reluctant to continue funding for this specific project as proposed. It was suggested to consider incorporating funding for FPS's work on viruses into the Board's budget instead of considering it with the other research proposals. Several Board members asked about the possibility of FPS receiving funding from alternative sources including other industry organizations and other states. Ultimately, it was agreed to fund the proposal for one more year at a reduced rate while encouraging future discussion about the best means to support FPS.

- It was moved, seconded, and passed by the Board to approve one year of funding for Foundation Plant Service's continued grapevine propagation and testing at 50% of the proposed first year budget (i.e. \$115,837 in FY 2025-26). As part of the motion, the Board encouraged matching from other industry bodies including from other states, and planned to discuss further the most appropriate funding source for this work moving forward.

### **Details of Board Vote**

Motion: Steve McIntyre      Second: Randy Heinzen

In Favor: Bitter, Coleman, Drayton, Harkey, Heinzen, Lange, McIntyre, Schwebs

Against: Irwin

Abstain: Rossini

Absent: Hammond\*\*, Hoxsey-Onysko, Ledbetter, Teuschler\*\*

\*\*Not present for this action item

## **RESEARCH PROGRAM UPDATE AND FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Steve McIntyre of the PD/GWSS Board provided an update regarding the Research Screening Committee (RSC) and funding recommendations for the next round of grant projects. He started by thanking Kris Lowe for her work as research coordinator, the anonymous scientific review panel members, and those that participated at the RSC meeting. 29 proposals were reviewed, totaling \$9.1 million in requested funds. The group discussed the impact of reduced revenue, declining carryover funds, and the need to balance research funding with maintaining adequate reserves. The discussion included historical funding levels, current obligations, and projections for future income and expenses. The committee also considered the importance of not overcommitting funds given the downward trend in revenue and the unpredictability of future assessments. A conservative approach to funding was agreed upon, recommending full or partial funding for 10 proposals totaling \$2,092,783 over the next three fiscal years. Joe Damiano outlined how the committee aimed to maintain a reserve of around \$4.7 to \$5 million based on projections at that meeting when making funding recommendations.

A discussion of projected assessment revenue as it relates to funding availability for research ensued. For the RSC meeting, revenue from assessments was projected by staff to decrease by about 20%, based on uncertainty about crop yields and market conditions. However, several participants felt that a 20% reduction might be too aggressive, given new vineyard plantings and the possibility of improved yields. There was agreement that maintaining a healthy reserve was necessary to ensure financial stability in the face of unknowns. Some board members commented that last year's low yields were due to exceptional heat and weather conditions that were unlikely to be repeated, and that tariffs could increase demand for California-grown grapes. Others felt that using a 20% reduction as a planning baseline was a prudent, conservative approach for planning purposes. If actual revenue reductions were less severe, more research projects could be funded next year and funding allocations could be adjusted accordingly.

Greg Coleman asked for clarification on how much funding is already committed for future years and raised concerns about committing to three-year projects given the financial outlook, suggesting that future commitments be limited to one or two years. Steve McIntyre noted that the RSC took this approach and stated that only one of the 10 proposals recommended for funding was recommended to receive three years of funding. Domonic Rossini outlined the breakdown of existing obligations from previously approved projects. Kris Lowe mentioned University policies around hiring staff can require project leaders to secure funding for at least two years. It was noted that the legislation allows projects to be encumbered beyond the life of the board if already approved and that the board had enough carryover to fund the recommended proposals even if no additional revenue were received.

The RSC had also recommended discussing three additional proposals with the full Board and Task Force. Kris Lowe provided a synopsis of the remaining projects and what the RSC had recommended. The discussion around Maher Al Rwahnih's proposal and subsequent funding recommendation is summarized in the previous item in these minutes. Stephanie Bolton's proposal regarding a genetic fingerprinting technique for leafroll virus was not recommended for funding by the scientific reviewers, but there was significant industry interest. The project addressed a problem in Lodi regarding the traceability of virus sources, specifically Leafroll-3. The applicants planned to revise and resubmit the proposal in the next proposal cycle. Sunitha Sukumaran of Texas Tech University had submitted her proposal multiple years and made revisions based on prior reviewer feedback. It included testing for red blotch virus resistance in transgenic vines created with funding received several years earlier and development of a new diagnostic assay. There was interest but also concerns about policy implications of using genetic modification technologies, for which there was no precedent for approval in winegrapes. The proposal was recommended for funding by the scientific reviewers despite the policy uncertainties. Randy Heinzen mentioned that National Grape Research Alliance was planning to host a future workshop discussion of grape genetic improvement tools. No motion was made to recommend funding for this proposal.

Steve McIntyre asked the Board for a motion to recommend approval for the 10 proposals recommended for funding by the RSC.

- It was moved, seconded, and unanimously passed by the Board to recommend full or partial funding for 10 research proposals totaling \$2,092,783 over the next three fiscal years as recommended by the Research Screening Committee.

#### Details of Board Vote

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

\*\*Not present for this action item

Matt Kaiser of PDCP provided some brief updates regarding the research program. Jennifer Rohrs and Monica Cooper's team received a viticulture paper of the year award from the American Society for Enology and Viticulture (ASEV) for their work funded by the Board on red blotch which also generated significant data relevant to Rodrigo Almeida's current project. Monica will also be present at the next ASEV national conference in June. Plans were moving ahead with a Board-sponsored session on virus research at the ASEV conference featuring Rodrigo Almeida, Luca Brillante, Summaira Riaz or Luis Diaz-Garcia, and Yen Wen-Kuo. The session aimed to cover key topics in disease ecology and virus management, with speakers selected based on their expertise and ongoing projects, and like the session sponsored in 2023 would total \$5,000 from the Board's conference support line.

Kaiser also updated that a celebration of life was being planned by UC Davis for Dr. Anita Oberholster in May, and that Dr. Ben Montpetit would be taking over two grants previously led by Dr. Oberholster which would be continuing under no-cost extensions from prior years. Finally he highlighted a Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) Summit that was held online on March 11-13, 2025, which included discussion of SLF management and preparedness strategies. The summit included discussions of interactions between SLF, PD and sharpshooters led by Drew Harner from Virginia Tech.

#### **RESEARCH COORDINATOR AND NAS STUDY UPDATES**

Task Force Chairperson and Research Coordinator Kris Lowe reported on other grape research organizations' funding plans such as the American Vineyard Foundation and Oregon Wine Board and others. She also stated that she will be soon scheduling meetings for a subcommittee, with the goal of going over the recent National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report on viruses. Lowe stated the goal was to have three meetings with the intention of coming up with recommendations for the next RFP. Lowe would also be speaking about Board-funded research at the next Sustainable Ag Expo.

#### **OUTREACH, EDUCATION, AND REFERENDUM UPDATE**

Nicole Shorter of Brown-Miller Communications provided an update regarding recent outreach efforts as well as the ongoing referendum. Ballots were mailed on April 14, 2025, with an initial 30-day voting period ending May 13, 2025. If voter participation requirements are not met, the voting period will be extended which typically happens, allowing ballots to be postmarked by June 12, 2025. The CDFA Marketing Branch will then inform PDCP of the referendum results around June 20, 2025. Shorter explained the timeline and requirements for the referendum, emphasizing the need to meet voter participation thresholds. Outreach efforts, including strong support from board members and industry partners, were designed to maximize participation and awareness.

Shorter continued explaining the current program communication channels including quarterly newsletters and postcards, monthly e-newsletters, social media, and media coverage. The monthly e-newsletter is distributed to about 1,100 growers and other stakeholders, with a strong average open rate of about 47% and an average click-through rate of 5%. A companion news postcard will be mailed out to over 5,000 growers, stakeholders, and elected officials. Information from all these news materials is also posted on the PD board webpage and social media pages. The media coverage report indicated that the economic study and referendum received extensive coverage.

The 2024 Research Projects at a Glance report was also released last week and is available on the PDCP website. None of the researchers submitted video reports this year, but efforts will continue to pursue this opportunity again next year, as it is a popular way to get information out to growers about the different projects. Work is ongoing in collaboration with PDCP in regard to the annual report. Shorter presented data on the reach and engagement of the SLF outreach campaign, highlighting the various channels used and the specific outcomes of each engagement. Outreach activities include print ads in AgAlert (April) and American Vineyard (May), as well as Meta advertising in English and Spanish. In the last 90 days, the outreach had reached approximately 500,000 people and resulted in about 689 post-engagements, including likes, comments, shares, and click-throughs to the website to learn more about SLF.

### **STANISLAUS COUNTY ERADICATION PROJECT UPDATE**

Melissa Lovett of the Stanislaus County Agricultural Commissioner's office provided an update on the ongoing GWSS eradication efforts in Turlock. The project began after the first detection on August 5 of the previous year and escalated quickly following surveillance that found additional specimens and egg masses. The infestation covered an approximately four-square mile area in Turlock, specifically an older established neighborhood with a lot of backyard citrus and grape vines. Data provided up to the end of March included 3,258 trap checks, visual surveys of 2,665 properties, with current GWSS counts of 60 adults, 3 nymphs, 1 viable egg mass, and 11 emerged egg masses, all across 21 find sites. Stanislaus County responded with treatments as soon as possible. Visible results were noted within minutes of a foliar application of two heavily infested trees, with GWSS observed dropping out of trees. 963 soil injection applications were done between homes, apartment complexes, mobile home parks, and business parking lots. Additionally, biocontrol releases were implemented at nine sites in August and September. Further treatments were applied earlier this year to a large property full of crepe myrtles and the county fairgrounds, which are within the treatment area. Recent biocontrol releases over the last two weeks had been introduced and there had been no new detections since early March at properties already known to be infested.

Linda Pinfold, Stanislaus County Agricultural Commissioner, echoed Melissa's statements and thanked both her staff and CDFA staff for their efforts to quickly respond to the infestation. Beth Stone-Smith thanked Pinfold and Lovett for their efforts, highlighting the expertise within the County Agricultural Commissioner system and acknowledged Pinfold's previous experience with the successful European grapevine moth eradication.

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

Beth Stone-Smith of the USDA provided a brief update regarding recent area-wide trapping efforts. The traps are currently being deployed, albeit with reduced numbers and timeframes to reduce costs as presented at the last meeting. Trap information would be ready in time to prepare for fall treatments. GWSS egg laying started in early March based on surveys by CDFA staff from Arvin. High temperatures in June and July were expected to align with the first generation of adults which would show up as increased trap detections. Domic Rossini asked about abandoned acreage in the San Joaquin Valley. Stone-Smith emphasized that county-level knowledge is crucial for program management decisions and

this topic was part of ongoing discussions in regular meetings with county staff, but she did not have specific information at that time about impacts to the program or GWSS populations. Stone-Smith concluded that additional information will be available at the next meeting as this season's trapping efforts have only recently started.

### **PDCP OPERATIONS UPDATES**

Stacie Oswalt of the PDCP provided an update regarding ongoing operations including Urban Delimitation and Rapid Response. Between January 1 and March 31, 2025, there were 7,668 nursery stock shipments from the GWSS generally infested areas to non-infested areas of the state. One Notice of Rejection was issued during this timeframe by a receiving county for a viable GWSS life stage found during inspection of incoming nursery stock. Year-to-date, two egg masses had been found and stopped by origin county inspectors on the loading docks during outgoing inspections.

Oswalt elaborated that between January 1 and March 31, 2025, there were 1,340 ATP shipments consisting of approximately 301,825 plants. No regulatory actions had been taken year-to-date against any ATP nurseries for viable life stages. Spring soil treatments are underway in the El Dorado Hills GWSS eradication project area and will continue throughout the season as needed. As of the second week of April, approximately 250 residential properties and 40 acres of common areas had been treated. Biological control releases began in April, with 1,380 wasps released within the project area. Forty-two GWSS adults had been found year to date. Spring soil treatments were completed on 846 properties this spring in the Vacaville project area in Solano County in response to previous GWSS detections. Visual survey started the first week of April around previous find-sites. Biological control releases began in April, with 1,440 wasps released within the project area with the last positive find was July 3, 2024. For Stanislaus County, soil treatments in the Turlock project area were complete, with 11 properties treated this spring in response to previous GWSS detections. Three of these properties were very large and included an apartment complex, cemetery, and fairgrounds. Supplemental foliar treatments had also occurred. Biological control releases began in April with 1,470 wasps released within the project area. One GWSS adult had been found year-to-date.

### **INVASIVE PEST SURVEY UPDATE**

Joanna Fisher of CDFA Plant Health and Pest Prevention Services (PHPPS) provided a comprehensive update of various invasive pest surveys related to grapes. The Spotted lanternfly (SLF) survey, initiated in 2021 by the Pest Detection and Emergency Projects (PDEP) Branch, is a visual survey targeting high-risk locations in the state, conducted in 12 counties in 2024. The survey was funded by USDA and conducted by county agricultural staff under various agreements. In 2024, a total of 561 sites were surveyed, focusing on high-risk locations such as rail yards, residential areas, landscaping, stone importers, fairgrounds, colleges, and campgrounds. Fisher elaborated on methods used to determine high risk sites, including modeling by Temple University as well as quarantine records of materials moved from infested areas. The survey focused on host plants like tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), which is the primary host for SLF, along with grapevines. To date, no (SLF) were found. Fisher reported that CDFA did not receive federal funding for a SLF survey in 2025.

The European grapevine moth was detected in Napa in 2009 and successfully eradicated from California in 2016. CDFA continues to survey annually in 38 counties to ensure early detection and rapid response if it suddenly reappears, and was enacting cost saving measures to offset rising costs and flat funding. CDFA also conducts periodic surveys targeting high-risk pests as well and phytoplasma diseases in grapes as these diseases can cause plant dieback and are incredibly hard to eradicate. The survey last occurred in FY 2024-25 in the top 10 grape producing counties with no detections and was planned again for FY 2025-26. Finally, invasive fruit flies remained a major focus, with significant activity in 2023 but improved outcomes in 2024. In 2023, there were 7 quarantines and 900



fruit flies detected, an exceptional year, but by 2024, detections had dropped significantly to 139 flies and 2 quarantines, with far fewer delimitations and eradications. Fisher then outlined survey and eradication methods and updates for specific areas and fruit fly species.

In response to questions about federal funding for pest surveys, Fisher and Beth Stone-Smith outlined how multiple funding sources and annual appropriations support pest surveys but there were delays and uncertainties in funding for 2025 affecting survey planning and execution. The SLF survey would not be funded by USDA in 2025 and funding for other surveys, such as the European grapevine moth, would see reductions in scope. Some projects, including some related to fruit flies, were held up by additional administrative processes with the delayed federal budget and internal review processes.

#### **OTHER ITEMS**

None.

#### **CLOSING COMMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT**

Board Chairperson Randy Heinzen and Task Force Chairperson Kris Lowe adjourned the meeting at 3:59 PM.

Respectfully submitted on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025, by  
Giancarlo LaGiusa, Associate Governmental Program Analyst  
Pierce's Disease Control Program  
California Department of Food and Agriculture