

April 1, 2005

Kern/Tulare

GWSS Update



A project of the Glassy-winged Sharpshooter Task Force of Kern and Tulare Counties. Participants: Agricultural Commissioner's Offices of Kern and Tulare Counties, California Department of Food and Agriculture, University of California-Cooperative Extension, U.S. Department of Agriculture (APHIS and ARS Divisions).

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Kern, Tulare table-grape pest control districts elect officers, propose \$8 per-acre assessment

The fledgling Table Grape Pest and Disease Control Districts of Kern and Tulare counties have selected their first board officers.

Paul Giboney, ranch agronomist for M. Caratan, Inc., was elected chairman of the Kern district by fellow board members at their first meeting March 22.

Max Jehle, a pest management specialist with Sunview Vineyards, was chosen as Tulare district chairman at the board's initial gathering yesterday.

Both boards have proposed an assessment of \$8 per acre from owners of county table-grape acreage to fund district activities. Kern and Tulare county table-grape acreage owners will vote later this spring on whether to accept that assessment. The two boards first plan to send out an introductory letter to explain the goals and mission of each district. Ballots then will be mailed to voters in mid-April. Votes would be counted after 45 days, which would be sometime in June.

"There a lot of legal work that needs to be done first," says Jehle.

Eventually, the two districts hope to combine.

"Once the districts are established, the assessment is passed and there's funding, we want to hire an executive director to



Paul Giboney

coordinate the activities of the two districts," Jehle says.

If the proposed \$8 per-acre assessment is approved by table-grape acreage owners, that could produce a budget of about \$600,000 combined for both Kern and Tulare Counties, says Gisela



Max Jehle

Wittenborn, secretary-treasurer for Kern County's pest and disease control district.

An assessment approval would allow the districts to borrow against the expected assessment revenue and to begin their operations.

The assessment would be channeled through property taxes collected in November and early December.

"I'm really proud that we got as far as we have," says Wittenborn, an entomologist with Marko Zaninovich, Inc. "But a district without a budget would be a disaster. I'm really counting on growers to pull through on the assessment vote."

District goals. The two districts were formed to help the table-grape industry combat Pierce's Disease (PD) and the glassy-winged sharpshooter (GWSS), and to assume a better position in preventing new invasive table-grape pests from establishing themselves, says Wittenborn.

"The districts provide an organizational structure, which allows table-grape growers to take a leadership role and provide direction in partnership with the government agencies who are involved," she says. "In this way, the districts will be able to leverage continued funding for the current GWSS/PD control efforts as well as give the industry the needed edge on new pests."

For those purposes, Wittenborn adds, an executive director will be hired, and an emergency pest control fund is being created.

"GWSS is only one of the pest management issues at the moment," says Jehle. "It's only a matter of time before other exotic

(continued on page 2)

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Gisela Wittenborn, secretary-treasurer, Kern County Table Grape Pest and Disease Control District



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(continued from page 1)

pests enter the Central Valley. In my 25 years here, I've seen four or five pests arrive that were not managed as well as they could have been."

Jehle points to the vine mealy bug, which has spread throughout the state.

"That could have been handled much differently if a pest control district had been in place to coordinate management strategies. The creation of the table-grape district will enable us to react in a more organized, economical manner when encountering these types of pest and disease issues."

Jehle commended the Tulare County

Agricultural Commissioner's office for its efforts to gain district approval from the county board of supervisors.

"The support of the staff, and particularly Commissioner Gary Kunkel and Assistant Commissioner Bill Appleby, was instrumental in helping with the formation of the pest control district," Jehle says.

Jehle says the assessment vote is important. "People tend not to play close attention to exotic pests until they're in their vineyards causing economic loss. By then, they're costing you thousands of dollars to manage. A vote for the pest control district assessment will give table-grape growers the resources to take an invasion of exotic pests head on."

The Kern County district board will next meet Wednesday, April 6 at 1 p.m. at the Kern County Farm and Home Advisors Office in Bakersfield.

—by Catherine Merlo

Table Grape Pest and Disease Control District officers

Kern County

Chairman: Paul Giboney, M. Caratan, Inc.

Vice chairman: Eric Casterline, Sun World International

Secretary-Treasurer: Gisela Wittenborn, Marko Zaninovich, Inc.

Tulare County

Chairman: Max Jehle, Sunview Vineyards

Vice chairman: Art Foster, Delano Farms

Secretary-Treasurer: Clarence Robbins, Sundale Vineyards

Find updated nursery program information online

You can find updated information on CDFA's Nursery Regulatory Program at <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/phpps/pdcp/GuidelinesandRegulations/gwNursery.htm>.

The site includes guidelines and regulations for nursery shipping protocols and program requirements.

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Max Jehle,
chairman,
Tulare County Table
Grape Pest and
Disease Control
District