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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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Tulare County approves \$8 table-grape assessment

Work begins on building table-grape pest control districts in Kern and Tulare Counties

Echoing June's similar referendum outcome in Kern County, Tulare County table-grape growers approved an \$8 per-acre assessment Aug. 9 to fund a pest and disease control district.

Now the Kern and Tulare county districts will take steps to form a joint powers agreement to share their resources. Together, the two districts will work to protect the table-grape industry from the glassy-winged sharpshooter, Pierce's disease and other new invasive pests and diseases that threaten production.

"Thanks to all the people who helped make this vote a success, which in April was not given a very high likelihood of happening this year," says Max Jehle, board chairman of the Tulare County Tablegrape Pest and Disease Control District.

Nearly 69% of Tulare County's eligible acres that voted responded in favor of the assessment. According to Paul Giboney, chairman of the Kern County Tablegrape Pest and Disease Control District:

- Total Tulare County acres voting for the assessment were 13,295.
- Total acres voting against were 6,105.
- Ballots were sent to a total of 39,450 acres. Of that, 19,400 acres—or 49.18%—voted.
- There were no protests.
- The Tulare County Board of Supervisors accepted the vote and approved an agreement with the Auditor/Controller to collect the assessments on the tax roll for the pest control district for this coming tax year.

"A job well done by all," notes Sun World's Kevin Andrew, a table-grape grower and chair of the Pierce's Disease



Advisory Task Force. "Now it's time to roll up our collective sleeves and get to work. Getting the districts approved was the easy part."

Both district boards will have to approve the joint powers agreement. Once that's done, the County Board of Supervisors in Kern and in Tulare will also have to approve it.

"We'll be making the moves to accomplish all this before the end of the year," says Giboney, ranch agronomist for Delano-based M. Caratan Inc.

Among the goals of the combined districts are hiring an executive director to coordinate district activities and creating an emergency pest control fund.

The \$8 per-acre assessment could produce a yearly budget of about \$800,000 for the combined district.

"The board would especially like to thank the Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner's office for its support and hard work in making this district a reality," says Jehle, a pest management specialist with Sunview Vineyards. "We would also like to thank Ramon Avelar, Sunview's IT specialist, for helping with the construction of the assessment role for the district."

— Catherine Merlo

Table-grape growers in Kern and Tulare Counties will now be assessed \$8 per acre to fund activities to protect their production from pest and disease threats. (Photo: Catherine Merlo)