

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 Counties consolidate table-grape pest and disease control districts

The Table Grape Pest and Disease Control Districts of Kern and Tulare Counties formally consolidated Dec. 20 after receiving the unanimous approval of the Kern County Board of Supervisors.

The unified district, now known as the Consolidated Central Valley Table Grape Pest and Disease Control District, "allows us to function more efficiently," says Paul Giboney, district chair.

That means combining the budgets of both county districts, which should total more than \$700,000 a year. The funds will be derived from property tax assessments of local table-grape acreage owners.

As a result of the consolidation, the district also merged its two boards to create a nine-member body to oversee the district's policies and activities. New officers are:

- Chair - Paul Giboney of M. Caratan Inc., Delano;
 - Vice chair - Max Jehle, Rio Blanco, Delano;
 - Secretary-Treasurer - Gisela Wittenborn, Marco Zaninovich, Inc., Delano;
 - Vice Secretary-Treasurer - Art Foster, Delano Farms, Delano.
- Board members are:
- Eric Casterline, Sun World International, Bakersfield;
 - Jason Kosareff, VBZ Farms, Richgrove;
 - Andrew Pandol, Pandol and Sons, Inc., Delano;
 - Bob McCloskey, Green Valley, Terra Bella;
 - Blake Ueki, Lagomarsino Farming, LLC, Tulare.

Stewart-Leslie named manager of Central Valley table grape district

Judy Stewart-Leslie was named manager of the new Consolidated Central Valley Table Grape Pest and Disease Control District Jan. 16.

Stewart-Leslie was the board's unanimous choice from a field of several candidates, said district chair Paul Giboney.

"We are extremely pleased to have somebody of Judy's caliber come on board to represent the district," Giboney said.

A graduate of Cal Poly State University-San Luis Obispo, Stewart-Leslie has worked as a

pest control advisor with Exeter-based Pest Management Associates for 20 years. Since last year, she has also focused on serving as a treatment coordinator for Tulare County and northern Kern County under the GWSS Area-wide Management Program. She will continue in that position while serving as the table-grape district's new manager.

"I've had a chance to work with the members of the board in my role as treatment coordinator," Stewart-Leslie said. "They're a great group, and I'm excited to have the chance to work more closely with them."

In her role as manager of the table-grape district, Stewart-Leslie will help the district watch for and respond to any introduction of invasive pests or diseases that threaten the local table-grape industry. Working with the board, she will direct her energies toward funding, research, education, contingency plans and communications with government agencies and industry groups.

Stewart-Leslie, who will be based in Exeter, can be reached at (559) 730-8691 or jsleslie@msn.com.



Judy Stewart-Leslie will manage district activities from Exeter. (Photo: Catherine Merlo)

Watching for new threats. The new board will begin prioritizing where its funding should be spent, said Giboney.

"One of our main goals is to react

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quickly and decisively to any new threats to the table-grape industry," he said. "We don't want a repeat of the vine mealy bug or the glassy-winged sharpshooter, where pests established themselves and cost the industry millions of dollars."

Research and communication. In addition, the table-grape district will examine the industry's research needs. "If we determine that local needs are not being met, we would consider funding research ourselves or working with other funding groups," Giboney says.

The district plans to become more involved with the statewide Pierce's Disease Task Force and to work closely with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, California Department of Agriculture, and local agricultural commissioners' offices to help control

GWSS and other pests.

"We're really looking forward to 2006," says Giboney. "Now that we've finally got the organization and structure coming together, along with a new manager, that will allow us to do some exciting things on behalf of the table-grape industry."

The district also has designated a certified public accountant, and is finalizing its selection of an attorney, to help handle its needs.

Giboney said he was grateful for the support the district has received from its board members, the Agricultural Commissioners' Offices and Boards of Supervisors of Tulare and Kern Counties, CDFG, USDA, the California Table Grape Commission and the California Grape and Tree Fruit League.

— *Catherine Merlo*

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Paul Giboney,
chair,
Central Valley Table
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