

May 13, 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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Spring GWSS treatments begin in four-county area

Kern, Tulare, Ventura and Riverside Counties, all under the Glassy-winged Sharpshooter (GWSS) Area-wide Management Program, have begun treating citrus groves to keep the pest under control.

"GWSS population numbers look very low overall," says Beth Stone-Smith, Western Region GWSS program director for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. "We have the federal funding in place and will continue to do treatments as necessary."

In Kern County, the GWSS egg-laying period has ended, leaving sharpshooter watchers waiting for the next generation of nymphs to emerge. Cooler weather has slowed GWSS activity, but Stone-Smith expects trap counts to pick up soon.

"The arrival of warm weather prompts adults to become more active," she says. "Also, as the next generation of GWSS develop into adults, they're able to fly about and hit traps. I believe GWSS numbers will remain low even then because of control measures we've made in the past."

Some 4,300 acres of Kern County citrus have been treated or are slated for treatment this spring. Most of them are located in the Highway 65 area and in the Northern and General Beale Road Zones.

Kern County received its federal GWSS funds this week, confirms Darin Heard of the Kern County Agricultural Commissioner's Office. That ensures that citrus growers whose orchards undergo treatment will be reimbursed for those expenses.

Tulare County, which is also seeing low counts of GWSS in traps, has treated almost 60 acres of citrus, with another 300 acres pending. Dennis Haines, with the Tulare County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, reports that rural residential properties from Terra Bella south to the Kern County line have already been treated "to remove reservoirs of GWSS to complement the overall area-wide program.

"Numbers are looking good, but we have had unusual weather," Haines says. "We are anxiously awaiting hot weather to see what happens."

In Ventura County, GWSS counts are slightly higher with a wide-spread count of two to five sharpshooters per trap. "Their season is different from Kern's and Tulare's," says Stone-Smith. "They're about a month ahead of us."

So far, Ventura has treated 577 acres of citrus with another 335 slated for treatment. "They're adding treatment acreage as they assess each area," Stone-Smith says.

"Our Ventura area-wide program has changed for this 2005 season," she adds. "We are moving away from trying to do full-scale area-wide treatments in all citrus and are focusing on treatments in citrus that's within a half-mile buffer of nurseries. We are trying to take some pressure off of these nurseries that are surrounded by citrus and continually getting re-infested by GWSS."

Riverside County is presently treating citrus groves in both the Coachella Valley and Temecula area, where GWSS numbers also remain relatively low. Coachella has 3,100 acres ready for treatment out of its 12,000 total citrus acres. Temecula, which has received no area-wide treatments since 2000, intends to treat virtually all of its 1,500 citrus acres.

"We expected to treat all of Temecula's acreage this year since area-wide treatments were unable to go in late in 2004 due to weather-related problems," says Stone-Smith. "In the Coachella Valley, we are treating slightly more acreage than expected, but it is minor compared to having to treat the entire area over again."

—Catherine Merlo



Some 4,300 acres of Kern County citrus are slated for GWSS treatments this spring. (Photo: Gabriel M. Gaeta)

Kern pest control assessment ballots mailed

Ballots were mailed to Kern County's table grape acreage owners last Friday as part of the new pest and disease control district.

The ballots seek voting on whether to approve an \$8-per-acre assessment for district activities.

Tulare County will send out a similar ballot in early June.