

# Commission Relentless in Hunt for PSHB Management Options

By Ken Melban

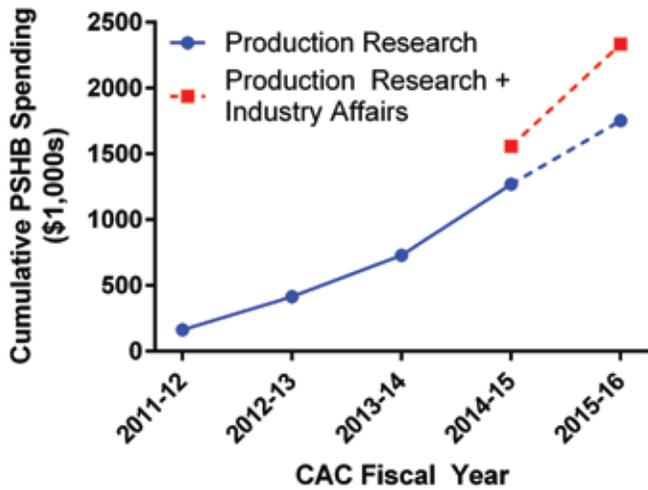
*Vice President of Industry Affairs*

**I**t has been about a year since the polyphagous shot hole borer (PSHB) was first detected in commercial avocado groves in Escondido, and the Commission remains aggressive in our search for possible control options.

Currently there are 19 groves confirmed to have San Diego beetles — 18 in San Diego County and one in Orange County. The Los Angeles beetle is knocking on the door of Ventura County with multiple finds in ornamental trees near the border, the closest within 1.5 miles. While there has certainly been beetle movement and additional groves are infested, it appears, for now, that the spread hasn't occurred as rapidly as was first feared. But there is a tremendous amount of uncertainty about the behavior of this insect, and it remains a legitimate threat to California avocados. We could wake up tomorrow to widespread infestations

throughout the entire avocado industry.

Since 2012 the Commission has funded \$1.6 million in research specific to PSHB and Fusarium Dieback (FD), with another \$700,000 in project requests for the upcoming 2015-16 fiscal year. Past and current funding for research includes identification of PSHB and FD disease; monitoring for PSHB and FD; assessment of fungicides and biocontrol agents to control FD transmitted by PSHB; evaluation of pesticide and biocontrol agents for PSHB; trapping optimization and possible PSHB attract-and-kill strategies; and the epidemiology of PSHB. In addition, last year, once the beetle was discovered in commercial avocado groves, the Commission immediately launched an early detection program to provide the industry with real time information on the location and movement of the beetle populations.



provided the board with preliminary program planning for 2015-16 and possible budget and assessment scenarios. During that discussion, the board began to wrestle with the current level of PSHB/FD spending compared with current budget constraints. Although the board remains committed to pursuing every possible option to manage this pest, they are prudently considering what is sustainable over the next few years. It was the general consensus of the board to stay the current course on the level of research spending, with the understanding that if it became necessary to increase the research funding those monies would need to come from another program.

On September 1 and 2, grower meetings were held in Escondido and Santa Paula. UC Riverside researchers Drs. Richard Stouthamer, Frank Byrne and Akif Eskalen reported on the progress of their research activities. Specific information presented at these meetings can be found in Dr. Tim Spann's "PSHB Update" article. This was the third series of grower update meetings the Commission conducted in the past year, along with multiple email updates. The Commission will continue to provide updates to the industry as more information becomes available. 🥑

With this year's smaller-than-expected crop and reduction in projected assessment revenue, the Commission made cuts mid-year to all programs. In addition, over the last few years, the board has worked to methodically spend down the unexpected high reserve that had accrued. At the August Commission meeting, President Tom Bellamore



*Dr. Eskalen educates growers on PSHB/FD identification at a grower meeting on September 2 in Santa Paula.*