

PSHB Detected in Ventura County

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In early November, four separate finds of the polyphagous shot hole borer (PSHB) and Fusarium Dieback (FD) occurred in Ventura County (VC). The first two beetles were caught in traps deployed as part of the California Avocado Commission's (CAC's) detection program and were located on the western end of Santa Paula and in Ojai. Both of these initial detections were not in avocado groves.

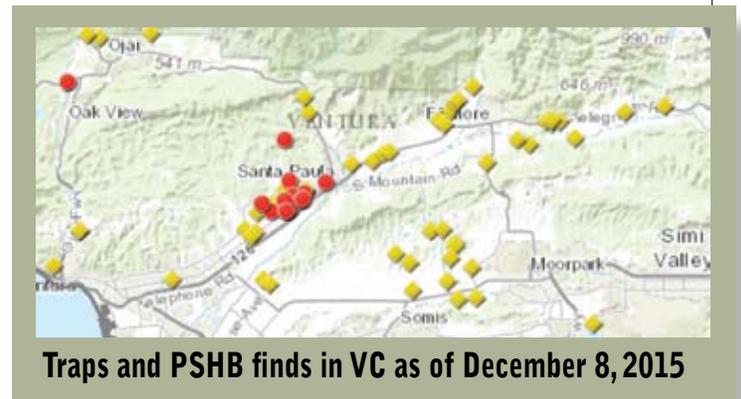
Within a few days, however, ground surveying by staff from the University of California at Riverside (UCR) and the Commission resulted in two beetle finds in an avocado grove just west of Santa Paula. A few days after this second find, another grower and his pest control advisor (PCA) confirmed a PSHB find in a grove west of Santa Paula. As of this writing, six additional groves to the west of Santa Paula have been confirmed to have PSHB.

Although the PSHB was known to be in Los Angeles County just a few miles from the Ventura County line, these were the first detections in Ventura County. The Commission had recently deployed a number of traps along the Ventura County side of the border with Los Angeles County and was hopeful the first detection would be in one of those traps, but unfortunately the beetles were able to bypass the perimeter traps. It's not certain how the PSHB made its way into Ventura County. It may have arrived through natural flight, but the beetles also could have been transported in green waste, firewood, nursery stock or other avenues.

Prior to these finds, the Commission's detection program in Ventura County had focused primarily on areas deemed a high risk for the importation of PSHB through the movement of green waste, firewood or nursery stock from infested counties. In fact, one of the two first detections occurred in a high-risk location. Once confirmation of the beetle in Ventura County was made, the Commission immediately began to move traps into avocado groves to determine how widespread the PSHB infestation was within the County and to delineate the boundaries. Traps were primarily positioned west and east of Santa Paula and along CA-118. To date there are 70 traps deployed in Ventura County, the



VC traps deployed in high risk areas prior to first detection



Traps and PSHB finds in VC as of December 8, 2015

majority of which are in avocado groves.

With such a large range of hosts – more than 200 trees and plants including Sycamore, Box Willow and Castor Bean – the threat of this invasive pest complex is not limited to avocado. The Commission continues its efforts to build awareness among other non-agriculture stakeholders and has met with large scale tree nursery representatives to educate them on the threat of moving infested trees. In addition, CAC and the agricultural commissioner are working to ensure green waste operators are not importing material



Linda Bellamy, VC Ag Commissioner's Office, inspects funnel trap for PSHB

that may have PSHB. In counties with previous PSHB infestations, the Commission has pushed the California Department of Agriculture (CDFA) to implement sanctions that would address the movement of green waste, but has not met with success. CDFA stated that the movement of green waste was a county-to-county agreement and they (CDFA) were unable to restrict such movement. The challenge appears to be that counties with large urban populations generate significant green waste and rely on the adjacent counties for disposal.

It is important that growers and PCAs near infested areas increase their vigilance in scouting for PSHB/FD. Any suspected finds should be properly submitted to UCR researchers. Growers who have the PSHB should remove and chip infested branches. More information on how to properly submit samples and treatment options may be found at: <http://eskalenlab.ucr.edu/>.

The Commission and UCR researchers will continue our aggressive research efforts to find additional control options that include new pesticide and fungicide registrations, trapping techniques and biocontrol. More specific information can be found in Dr. Tim Spann's article entitled "Shot Hole Borer Update" on page 23.

The Commission strives to share the most recent PSHB information with the industry through Green Sheet alerts. If you are not currently receiving these alerts, please email cac.iaf@avocado.org or call the Commission's office at (949) 341-1955. 🥑



Researchers answer questions at recent PSHB grower meeting