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## **POSITION PAPER**

### **Funding the Battle Against the Glassy-Winged Sharpshooter and Pierce's Disease — FY 2009**

Pierce's disease, a fatal infection of grape vines caused by the bacterium *Xylella fastidiosa* (Xf), is being spread throughout California by the glassy winged sharpshooter (GWSS). GWSS was first detected in California in 1989. It has invaded much of Southern California and is established in the southern San Joaquin Valley.

This vigorous and difficult-to-control insect vector, indigenous to the southeastern United States and northern Mexico, threatens California's entire grape and wine-producing community. Commercial grape varieties grown in California cannot tolerate infection by the Xf bacterium and are quickly killed or rendered uneconomic. Xf infection spread by the GWSS is much more likely to kill grapevines because it frequently introduces the bacterium at the base of the cane and is less likely to be removed by pruning. There is no cure for Pierce's disease.

Even though the GWSS was introduced to the state only within the last decade, *xylella* based diseases (almond leaf scorch, phony peach disease, oleander leaf scorch, alfalfa dwarf disease and miscellaneous diseases affecting ornamental plants and shade trees) spread by the GWSS threatens to devastate grapes, tree fruits, almonds, and various ornamentals throughout much of the state. Without adequate control of this disease complex, virtually all vineyards in California are at risk. Significant degradation of almond orchards by *xylella infection* and serious loss of citrus production and quality caused by GWSS feeding is a very real and present danger.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The onslaught of the GWSS and its spread of Pierce's disease have triggered a massive and expensive cooperative response by federal and state agencies, California nurseries, citrus and winegrape growers to contain, control and eventually eradicate the GWSS in California. The risks to California agriculture presented by the GWSS were recognized by a USDA declaration of emergency June 23, 2000 and subsequent allocation of CCC funds to conduct research, manage and fight the disease.

Congress appropriated money to fund GWSS and Pierce's disease research beginning in FY 2001 and every year thereafter. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) received Congressional appropriations of \$8.5 million in FY 2002, \$17.5 million in FY 2003, \$22.25 million in FY 2004, \$23.19 million in FY 2005 and \$24.25 million in 2006 for GWSS

containment and control. The figures for FY 2007 are difficult to decipher because appropriations bills were not passed for that year. For FY 2008, Congress provided \$23.175 million.

Through the appropriation process, Congress has funded an annual Cooperative State Research Education Extension Service (CSREES) special grant to research Pierce's disease (\$2.211 million in FY 2006) that has significantly supplemented Agricultural Research Service (ARS) research on the GWSS. This special grant, like others in FY 2007, was not funded. Only \$1.642 million was appropriated for FY 2008. It is critical that this program return to the level of funding provided in FY 2006--\$2.211 million. The special grant selects recipients based on a peer reviewed competitive process with grants ultimately disbursed to scientists in several states.

In 2001, winegrape growers in California successfully passed state legislation to create a mandatory winegrape grower assessment and a Pierce's Disease Advisory Board. In a 2005 referendum, growers representing almost 90% of the total value of winegrape production in California voted to continue the program for five more years. The assessment so far has raised more than \$30 million. The assessment has helped to fund critical research efforts, has funded a bulk grape inspection program, and has funded a National Academy of Sciences review of research efforts. A Science Advisory Panel of top national researchers has recently been appointed to provide scientific peer review for ongoing projects and strategic advice for new projects that will result in a long-term solution. The State of California also has contributed about \$50 million to the program.

Research on the GWSS and Pierce's disease also will benefit Texas where GWSS and PD impact the state's winegrowing business and other states interested in GWSS/PD exclusion. These include states in the Southeast where Pierce's and other *xyella* based diseases vectored by the GWSS severely impact the development of winegrape production and potentially poses a danger to other fruit crops including citrus in Florida (citrus variegated chlorosis) and peaches in Georgia.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To combat this disastrous disease, WineAmerica and the Winegrape Growers of America believe that Congress should continue to supplement state and private efforts. We respectfully request that:

- Congress specify funding for the APHIS Containment and Control program at \$30 million.
- Congress provide funding for the CSREES special grant for Pierce's disease for the University of California at \$2.211 million.

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*WineAmerica is the national trade association of American wine producers with more than 800 wineries in 48 states. Questions should be directed to Bill Nelson, President of WineAmerica, at (202) 783-2756 Extension 123.*

*Winegrape Growers of America is a federation of state winegrape grower organizations representing America's production of grapes for wine. For more information contact Fowler West at The Washington Group, (202) 789-2111.*