

**FINDINGS OF AN EMERGENCY FOR
ASIAN CITRUS PSYLLID/HUANGLONGBING
Los Angeles County
Program CE-8099**

Between March 30, 2012 to August 13, 2021, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) confirmed the presence of the causative bacterial agent of the citrus disease huanglongbing (HLB) from citrus tree tissue collected in the cities of Cerritos, Compton, Duarte, El Monte, Hacienda Heights, La Mirada, La Puente, Lakewood, Long Beach, Montebello, Norwalk, Paramount, Pico Rivera, Rosemead, San Gabriel, Temple City, and Whittier in Los Angeles County. HLB is a devastating disease of citrus and is spread through feeding action by populations of the Asian citrus psyllid (ACP), *Diaphorina citri* Kuwayama.

Additional surveys were conducted by CDFA in order to determine the extent of the infestation in Los Angeles County and to define an appropriate response area. Each survey took place for several days over a 250-meter radius area, centered on the following detections: March 30, 2012, Hacienda Heights; December 29, 2016, Cerritos; March 29, 2018, Rosemead; October 4, 2018, Duarte; April 12, 2019, Compton; April 12, 2019, Compton; May 31, 2019, Temple City; July 19, 2019, La Puente; October 4, 2019, Montebello; February 28, 2020, El Monte; September 18, 2020, La Mirada; April 9, 2021, San Gabriel; April 16, 2021, Long Beach; July 2, 2021, Lakewood; July 13, 2021, Norwalk; August 6, 2021, Paramount and Pico Rivera; August 13, 2021, Whittier. Based on these surveys, and findings and recommendations from California's HLB Task Force, the Primary State Entomologist, the Primary State Plant Pathologist, USDA experts on HLB and ACP, and County Agricultural Commissioner representatives who are knowledgeable on HLB and ACP, I have determined that HLB poses a statewide imminent danger to the environment and economy.

The results of the additional surveys also indicated that the local infestation is amenable to CDFA's ACP and HLB emergency response strategies, which include removal of any infected host plant. This option was selected based upon minimal impacts to the natural environment, biological effectiveness, minimal public intrusiveness, and cost.

HLB is considered one of the most devastating diseases of citrus in the world. The bacterium that causes the disease, namely *Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus*, blocks the flow of nutrients within the tree and causes the tree to starve to death within two to five years of infection. There is no cure. Symptoms of HLB include yellow shoots with mottling and chlorosis of the leaves, misshapen fruit, fruit that does not fully color, and fruit that has a very bitter taste, which makes it inedible for human consumption. These symptoms often do not appear until two years after infection, making this particular disease difficult to contain and suppress. These undesirable symptoms of HLB-infected trees result in the trees' loss of commercial and aesthetic value while at the same time they are hosts for spreading HLB.

ACP is an insect pest that is native to Asia. It has appeared in Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Mexico. In the United States, ACP has been found in Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Texas. In California, ACP has been found in twenty-eight counties.

ACP feeds on members of the plant family Rutaceae, primarily on *Citrus* and *Murraya* species, but is also known to attack several other genera, including over forty species of plant that act as hosts and possible carriers. The most serious damage to the environment and property caused by ACP—the death and loss in value of host plants—is due to its vectoring the phloem-inhabiting bacteria in the genus *Candidatus Liberibacter*. In addition, the psyllids also cause injury to their host plants via the withdrawal of large amounts of sap as they feed and via the production of large amounts of honeydew, which coats the leaves of the tree and encourages the growth of sooty mold. Sooty mold blocks sunlight from reaching the leaves.

These pests present a significant and imminent threat to the natural environment, agriculture, and economy of California. For example, unabated spread of HLB would have severe consequences to both the citrus industry and to the urban landscape via the decline and the death of citrus trees. The value of California citrus production in the 2016-17 marketing year was \$3.389 billion. The total economic impact of the industry on California's economy in 2016-17 was \$7.1 billion. The California citrus industry added \$1.695 billion to California's state GDP in 2016. Estimated full time equivalent jobs in the California citrus industry in 2016-17 totaled 21,674. Estimated wages paid by the California citrus industry income in 2016-17 totaled \$452 million. A 20 percent reduction in California citrus acreage would cause a loss of 7,350 jobs, \$127 million in employee income, and reduce state GDP by \$501 million.

Additionally, if unabated, the establishment of HLB in California would harm the natural environment as commercial and residential citrus growers would be forced to increase pesticide use. And, the establishment of HLB could lead to enforcement of quarantine restrictions by the USDA and our international trading partners. Such restrictions would jeopardize California's citrus exports, which are valued at over \$800 million per year.

The causative bacteria of HLB was first detected in Los Angeles in 2012. It has subsequently been detected in Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties. Prior to November 2017, the level of HLB risk in California was thought to be relatively stable. However, on November 22, 2017, the University of California and the United States Department of Agriculture released a briefing paper that indicates, beginning in June 2017, a sharp increase in HLB and HLB-positive ACP detections, cities containing HLB, and ACP nymphs. Following the release of the November 22, 2017 briefing paper, the Department has become aware of the exponential intensification of the HLB epidemic, as demonstrated by the indicators contained in the paper.

Infected trees are destroyed as soon as they are discovered. However, due to the length of time it takes for symptoms to appear on infected trees, new infestations continue to be discovered. If the current infestation is not abated immediately, HLB will likely become established in neighboring counties and could pave the way for a statewide HLB infestation.

The CDFA has evaluated possible treatment methods in accordance with integrated pest management (IPM) principles. As part of these principles, I have considered the following treatments for control of HLB: 1) physical controls; 2) cultural controls; 3) biological controls; and 4) chemical controls. Upon careful evaluation of each these options, I have determined that it is necessary to address the imminent threat posed by HLB using currently available technology in a manner that is recommended by the HLB Task Force.

Based upon input from the HLB Task Force, the Primary State Entomologist, the Primary State Plant Pathologist, USDA experts on HLB and ACP, and county agricultural commissioner representatives who are knowledgeable on ACP and HLB, I find there are no cultural, chemical or biological control methods that are both effective against HLB-positive trees and allow CDFA to meet its statutory obligations, and therefore it is necessary to conduct physical and chemical treatments to abate this threat. As a result, I am ordering removal of all HLB-infected trees.

A Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) has been prepared which analyzes the ACP and HLB treatment program in accordance with Public Resources Code (PRC), section 21000 et seq. The PEIR was certified in December 2014 and is available at <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/plant/peir/>. The PEIR addresses the treatment of the ACP and HLB at the program level and provides guidance on future actions against the ACP and HLB. It identifies feasible alternatives and possible mitigation measures to be implemented for individual ACP and HLB treatment activities. The ACP and HLB program have incorporated the mitigation measures and integrated pest management techniques as

described in the PEIR. In accordance with PRC section 21105, this PEIR has been filed with the appropriate local planning agency of all affected cities and counties. No local conditions have been detected which would justify or necessitate preparation of a site-specific plan.

Sensitive Areas

The CDFA has consulted with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's California Natural Diversity Database for threatened or endangered species, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife when rare and endangered species are located within the treatment area. Mitigation measures for rare and endangered species will be implemented as needed. The CDFA shall not apply pesticides to bodies of water or undeveloped areas of native vegetation. All treatment shall be applied to residential properties, common areas within residential development, non-agricultural commercial properties, and rights-of-way.

Work Plan

The proposed treatment area encompasses those portions of Los Angeles County which fall within a 250-meter radius area around the property on which HLB has been detected, and any subsequent detection sites within the treatment area boundaries. The Proclamation of Emergency Program and associated Notice of Treatment are valid until August 13, 2022, which is the amount of time necessary to determine that the treatment was successful. Maps of the treatment area boundaries are attached. The work plan consists of the following elements:

1. Physical Control. All host plants found to be infected with HLB shall be destroyed. Infected host plants shall be removed and destroyed using mechanical means.

Public Information

Residents of affected properties shall be invited to a public meeting or contacted directly by CDFA staff. Consultation with the California Department of Pesticide Regulation, the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, and the county agricultural commissioner's office will be provided at the public meeting or upon request to address residents' questions and concerns.

The resident of an affected property is provided a confirmation letter informing them that a tree on their property is infected with HLB and it is subject to mandatory removal. Residents are directed to contact the CDFA toll-free telephone number at 800-491-1899 for assistance.

Findings

HLB poses a significant, imminent threat to California's natural environment, agriculture, public and private property, and its economy.

The work plan involving physical control of this pest is necessary to prevent loss and damage to California's natural environment, citrus industry, native wildlife, private and public property, and food supplies.

My decision to adopt findings and take action is based on FAC sections 24.5, 401.5, 403, 407, 408, 5401-5405, and 5761-5764.

Karen Ross, Secretary

Date