

## **FINDINGS REGARDING AN EMERGENCY PROGRAM FOR ASIAN CITRUS PSYLLID AND HUANGLONGBING**

### **Baldwin Park, Cerritos, Duarte, El Monte, Industry, La Puente, Pico Rivera, South El Monte, South Monrovia Island, West Covina, Whittier, Los Angeles County Program LH-0008**

Between April 7, 2023 and April 28, 2023, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) confirmed the presence of the causative bacterial agent of the citrus disease huanglongbing (HLB) in citrus tree tissue and the insect vector, Asian citrus psyllid (ACP), *Diaphorina citri* Kuwayama. Citrus tree tissues and insect vectors were collected in the cities and communities of Cerritos, Duarte, El Monte, Industry, La Puente, Pico Rivera, South El Monte, West Covina, and Whittier in Los Angeles County. HLB is a devastating disease of citrus and is spread by ACP as they feed on host plants. Unless emergency action is taken to remove sources of the HLB inoculum and disrupt the ACP life cycle, there is high potential for sudden future detections of ACP in Los Angeles County and transmission of HLB to other areas.

CDFA conducted surveillance 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 in April 2023: Cerritos (one detection on April 10); Duarte (one detection on April 14); El Monte (one detection on April 10 and two detections on April 28); Industry (one detection on April 14); La Puente (one detection on April 21 and three detections on April 28); Pico Rivera (one detection on April 10 and two detections on April 14); South El Monte (one detection on April 21 and one detection on April 28); West Covina (one detection on April 7); Whittier (one detection on April 10). Based on these surveys, pest biology, findings and recommendations from California's HLB Task Force, the Primary State Entomologist, the Primary State Plant Pathologist, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) experts on HLB and ACP, county agricultural commissioner representatives who are knowledgeable on HLB and ACP, and experience gained from USDA's control efforts in the southeastern United States, I have determined that an infestation of HLB exists and it poses a statewide significant imminent danger to California's commercial citrus production, residential citrus plantings, and natural resources, and the economy. For example, the transmission of HLB to other areas would severely impact both the citrus industry and the urban landscape because the bacterium that causes the disease, *Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus* (CLAs), blocks the flow of nutrients within the tree and causes the tree to starve to death within two to five years of infection. California is the top citrus-producing state in the U.S., with total production valued at over \$3.4 billion in sales. Recent studies in Florida have shown that the presence of HLB increases citrus production costs by up to 40 percent and has resulted in a loss of over \$7 billion and 6,600 jobs.

Additional surveys also indicated that the local infestation is amenable to CDFA's ACP and HLB emergency response strategies, which include chemical and physical treatments. These options were 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. There is no cure for HLB. 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 disease particularly 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 such trees are hosts for spreading HLB.

ACP is an insect pest native to Asia. It has appeared in Central and South America. In the United States, ACP has been detected in Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Texas. In California, ACP has been detected in twenty-nine 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 HLB. In addition, ACP also causes 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.

Due to the rapid reproductive rate of ACP, there is a high potential for ACP to establish and spread, resulting in sudden future detections of HLB/ACP in the cities and communities listed above.

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. It could lead to enforcement of quarantine restrictions by the USDA and California's international trading partners. Such restrictions would jeopardize California's citrus exports, which are valued at over \$7 billion in economic revenue.

CLas was first detected in Los Angeles in 2012. It has subsequently been detected in Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties.

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, ACP will likely become established in neighboring counties and could pave the way for a statewide HLB infestation.

CDFA 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 ACP: 1) physical controls; 2) cultural controls; 3) biological controls; and 4) chemical controls. Upon careful evaluation of each of 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 or biological control methods that are both effective against ACP and allow CDFA to meet its statutory obligations, and therefore it is necessary to conduct chemical treatments to abate this threat. As a result, I am ordering visual surveillance for ACP and HLB and insecticide treatments for ACP using ground-based equipment within a 250-meter radius around each ACP and HLB detection site and any subsequent sites, and removal of all HLB-infected trees.

### **Sensitive Areas**

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. 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 and surveillance area encompasses those portions of Los Angeles County which fall within a 250-meter radius delimitation area around the properties on which ACP and HLB were detected, and any subsequent detection sites within the proposed treatment boundaries. The Proclamation of Emergency Program is valid until April 28, 2024, which is the amount of time necessary to determine that the treatment was successful. Maps of the treatment boundaries are attached. The work plan consists of the following elements:

1. ACP and HLB Survey. All host plants will be inspected for ACP and for HLB symptoms within a 250-meter radius around each ACP/HLB detection site, at least twice a year. ACP and host plant tissue will be collected and forwarded to a USDA accredited laboratory for identification and analysis.
2. HLB Disease Testing. All host tree tissues, and ACP life stages shall be tested for the presence of CLAs.
3. Treatment. All properties with host plants within a 250-meter radius around each HLB detection site shall be treated according to the following protocol to control ACP:
  - a. Tempo® SC Ultra, containing the contact pyrethroid insecticide cyfluthrin, shall be applied by ground-based hydraulic spray equipment to the foliage of host plants for controlling the adults and nymphs of ACP. Treatment may be reapplied up to three times annually if additional ACP are detected.
  - b. Either Merit® 2F or CoreTect™, containing the systemic insecticide imidacloprid, will be applied to the root zone beneath host plants for controlling developing nymphs and providing long term protection against reinfestation. Merit® 2F is applied as a soil drench, while CoreTect™ tablets are inserted two to five inches below the soil surface and watered in to initiate tablet dissolution. CoreTect™ is used in place of Merit® 2F in situations where there are environmental concerns about soil surface runoff of the liquid Merit® 2F formulation, such as host plants growing next to ponds and other environmentally sensitive areas. Treatment may be re-applied once annually if additional ACPs are detected.
4. Physical Control. All host plants found to be positive for the disease HLB (infected with CLAs) 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. Residents shall be notified in writing at least 48 hours in advance of any treatment in accordance with the Food and Agricultural Code (FAC), sections 5771-5779 and 5421-5436. After treatment, completion notices are left with the residents detailing precautions to take and post-harvest intervals applicable to the citrus fruit. Treatment information is posted at [http://cdfa.ca.gov/plant/acp/treatment\\_maps.html](http://cdfa.ca.gov/plant/acp/treatment_maps.html).

For any questions related to this program, please contact the CDFA toll-free telephone number at 800-491-1899 for assistance. This telephone number is also listed on all treatment notices. Treatment information is posted at [http://cdfa.ca.gov/plant/acp/treatment\\_maps.html](http://cdfa.ca.gov/plant/acp/treatment_maps.html).

Press releases, if issued, are prepared by the CDFA information officer and the county agricultural commissioner, in close coordination with the program leader responsible for treatment. Either the county agricultural commissioner or the public information officer serves as the primary contact to the media.

Information concerning the HLB/ACP program will be conveyed directly to local and State political representatives and authorities via letters, emails, and/or faxes.

## **Findings**

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

Unless emergency action is taken to disrupt the life cycles of recently detected ACP, there is high potential for sudden future ACP and HLB detections in Los Angeles County.

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

Therefore, I am invoking Public Resources Code Section 21080(b)(4) to carry out immediate emergency action to prevent this loss and damage.

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

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Karen Ross, Secretary

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Date