

Date of Hearing: April 10, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
Esmeralda Soria, Chair
AB 1861 (Addis) – As Introduced January 18, 2024

SUBJECT: Pest control: Pierce’s disease

SUMMARY: This bill would extend the Pierce’s Disease Control (PDC) Program to March 1, 2031. Currently the program will end on March 1, 2026.

Specifically, *this bill*:

- 1) Extends the Pierce’s Disease Control (PDC) Program to March 1, 2031. Currently, the program will end on March 1, 2026.
- 2) Deletes the requirement for the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to submit the bi-annual report to the Legislature and require an annual report to be publicly available on CDFA’s internet website on or before December 31 each year.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the PDC Program in the CDFA, and the Pierce’s Disease (PD) Management Account in the CDFA Fund. Allows certain money in this account to be expended to combat PD and its vectors, including the glassy-winged sharpshooter (GWSS), and for purposes relating to other designated pests and diseases, as provided. (Food and Agriculture code (FAC) 6045)
- 2) Requires CDFA to submit an annual report to the Legislature regarding its expenditures, progress, and ongoing priorities in combating PD and its vectors in California. (FAC 6045 and 6047.19)
- 3) Makes PDC Programs inoperative on March 1, 2026, and repeals them on January 1, 2027. (FAC 6045, 6047.19 and 6047.29)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown.

COMMENTS: In the late 1990s, PD threatened to cause damage to grapes due to the arrival of GWSS. GWSS carries the bacterium *Xylella fastidiosa*, which causes PD in grapes, almonds, oleander, and citrus fruits. When a plant develops PD, its ability to draw in moisture is hindered and the plant will either die or become unproductive.

In response, the Legislature enacted a legislative package that created the advisory task force on PD issues in 1999. In 2001, the program was created by AB 1394 (Wiggins), Chapter 103, Statutes of 2001, to fight the spread and find solutions for PD and GWSS. SB 1650 (Chesbro), Chapter 485, Statutes of 2004, made technical and substantive changes to the program, and added a referendum process for the continuance of the program and its related assessments, to be approved by a majority of the participants. The program is funded from federal and industry funds, and grape grower's assessments.

California's wine industry is a notable economic driver in California, creating jobs, encouraging tourism, and ensuring the preservation of agricultural land. Winegrapes are susceptible to a range of diseases that are deadly to the vines. One of the most prominent of these diseases is PD, carried between plants by GWSS.

GWSS are insects that hop between leaves, spreading disease between plants upon which they feed. Sharpshooters are native to North America, like the blue-green sharpshooter—which is native to Sonoma County—and the GWSS—which is native to northern Mexico and the southeastern United States. GWSS spread from Southern California up the state in the late 1980s, and is a vector to many diseases, including PD.

According to the author, by extending the sunset date of this program, California grape growers and wineries will continue to be able to use the research and monitoring to defend themselves against Pierce's Disease and the glassy-winged sharpshooter as they have been since 2001. This is especially the case for rural and small wine producers along the Central Coast.

According to supporters, since the 1990s, PD and the GWSS have been one of the most invasive and deadly pests for winged grape vines. The disease has caused millions upon millions of damage throughout the state. In response, the legislature created the Pierce's Disease and Glassy-Winged Sharpshooter Board. This bill will allow the wine industry, a notable economic driver in California, to continue to research, control, contain, and inspect to prevent the spread of PD.

PREVIOUS LEGISLATION:

AB 1232 (Assembly Agriculture Committee), Chapter 627, Statutes of 1999, appropriated \$750,000 each year for three specified fiscal years from the General Fund (GF) to CDFA for funding, on a competitive basis, PD research. The bill required the Secretary to appoint an advisory task force consisting of scientific experts to advise the Secretary on research to control and eradicate PD.

SB 671 (Chesbro), Chapter 21, Statutes of 2000, appropriated \$6.9 million from GF for the purpose of researching and combating PD and its vectors.

AB 1394 (Wiggins), Chapter 103, Statutes of 2001, created the PD and Glassy Wing Sharp Shooter GWSS Board.

SB 1650 (Chesbro), Chapter 485, Statutes of 2004, extended sunset dates to 2011 for provisions relating to PD and GWSS programs.

SB 295 (Chesbro), Chapter 12, Statutes of 2005, made conforming changes and clarified provisions relating to PD and GWSS programs.

SB 2 (Wiggins), Chapter 325, Statutes of 2009, extended research funding to include other significant pests and diseases. Also extended the program sunset date to 2016 for provisions relating to PD and GWSS programs.

AB 1642 (Chesbro), Chapter 231, Statutes of 2014, extended the program sunset date to 2020 for provisions relating to PD and GWSS programs.

SB 499 (McGuire), Chapter 371, Statutes of 2019, extended the program sunset date to 2020 for provisions relating to PD and GWSS programs.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Agricultural Commissioners & Sealers Association

CA Assn of Winegrape Growers

California Chamber of Commerce

California Farm Bureau

Family Winemakers of California

Napa Valley Grapegrowers

Napa Valley Vintners

Wine Institute

Opposition

None on file.

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