

Environmental Stewardship Campaign

Project No.: 04-ML-01

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Objectives

The Almond Board of California in November 2003 approved an Environmental Stewardship Public Relations program. Its goals are:

1. To keep almond growers informed about environmental issues and regulations of concern.
2. To promote the almond industry's environmental stewardship efforts by informing the general public, elected officials, regulatory officials, media and key opinion leaders about the positive steps almond farmers are taking to continually improve their farming practices while maintaining a productive and healthy environment for future generations.

Key Message

Thirty years of research funded by almond growers through the Almond Board has given the industry tools to become better stewards of the land. Today's almond farmers strive to continually improve their farming practices while maintain a productive and healthy environment for future generations.

The main elements of the campaign are:

1. Web-based Database – An almond industry website focused on environmental issues provides up-to-date and accurate information on Almond Board-funded research into key environmental issues. The website www.enviroag.org offers information on air quality, water quality, crop protection and endangered species issues.
2. Public Relations Outreach – A proactive public relations program highlights almond growers as environmental stewards of the land. Quarterly press releases in the first year told how almond growers are adopting pest management strategies that eliminate orchard pests without impacting the environment; how a study by the state Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) pointed to an encouraging drop in the use of dormant season organophosphates by almond growers; and how innovative almond harvesting equipment manufacturers are rising to the challenge of minimizing dust emissions during harvest.

3. Grower Outreach – Newsletters focused solely on environmental issues have informed growers about the importance of watershed coalitions to deal with water runoff issues; the importance of developing conservation management practices to control dust; and the phase-out of methyl bromide and Almond Board-funded research into alternatives.

Accomplishments

- Newsletter published in March 2004 on almond growers demonstrating innovative approaches in dealing with water runoff issues. Newsletter also provided background information on formation of watershed coalition and informational material about new state water runoff regulations. Also referenced was ongoing Almond Board-funded research into water quality issues.
- Press Release Issued in April 2004 on results of a UC Davis survey showing the almond growers are adopting pest management strategies that eliminate orchard pests without impacting the environment.
- Press Release issued in May 2004 on Board's approval of \$500,000 budget for research on various environmental issues such as air and water quality and crop protection.
- Special issue of publication in May 2004 by the Conservation Technology Information Center focused on "Growing Cleaner Air in the San Joaquin Valley" and featured Riverdale almond growers Jean and Dan Errotabere and their various conservation techniques they employ to control air emissions.
- Press release issued in May 2004 on workshops sponsored by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to assist almond growers with new air quality reporting and permitting requirements. The press release contained a list of all the workshop locations and times, as well as providing information on the air permits and conservation management plans growers were required to file.
- Newsletter published in June 2004 focused on air quality challenges facing almond growers and how they are meeting those challenges. The newsletter discussed three major issues facing growers—burning brush piles, controlling emissions from internal combustion engines and controlling particulate matter such as PM10. The newsletter provided background information on the new air quality rules and regulations that took effect July 1, 2004. The newsletter also referenced ongoing Almond Board-funded research into air quality issues.
- Press Release issued in June 2004 highlighted the innovative approaches almond harvesting manufacturers were taking in finding solutions to air quality issues.

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- Press Release issued in September 2004 announced the EPA's Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program (PESP had selected the Almond Board as a PESP Champion for the second consecutive year. The EPA cited the Board's progress and success on a number of reduced risk activities and in particular the results of field studies to reduce Naval Orangeworm populations in almond orchards using pheromone mating disruption techniques.
- Newsletter published on October 2004 focused on the phasing out of methyl bromide for use as a soil fumigant, its anticipated impact on almond growers, how the remaining supply of methyl bromide might be allocated to almond growers and an explanation of Almond Board-funded research into alternatives.
- Media Placements: The newsletters and press releases have resulted in considerable coverage of the almond industry's environmental stewardship efforts. In particular, air quality has been a high profile topic in the San Joaquin Valley. The newsletter and press release on air quality issues resulted in articles in the Modesto Bee, the Fresno Bee, Associated Press, Ag Alert, Capital Press, Almond Facts, California Country and various other publications.