

Environmental Stewardship Campaign

Project No.: 04-ML-01 **Correct Project Number: 05-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. Environmental Information on the web – The Almond Board's website (www.almondboard.com) has an environmental issues section that provides up-to-date and accurate information on Almond Board-funded research into key environmental issues. The section offers information on air quality, water quality, crop protection and endangered species issues, as well as a compilation of topical news items on environmental issues.

2. Public Relations Outreach – A proactive public relations program highlights almond growers as environmental stewards of the land. Press releases in the second year included:

* Announcement of the U.S. EPA awarding the Almond Board the prestigious Pesticide Environmental Stewardship (PESP) Champion award for the second consecutive year;

* A bloom time press release highlighted the pollination season and stressed the environmentally friendly work of almond growers;

* A June 2005 release focused on data compiled from the state Department of Pesticide Regulation showing that trends over the last ten years confirm that the almond industry is embracing reduced risk orchard management.

3. Grower Outreach – Newsletters focused solely on environmental issues have informed growers about the phase-out of methyl bromide as a soil fumigant; the growing role the Endangered Species Act plays in the use of crop protection tools; and harvest time innovations that are being used to help reduce dust.

Accomplishments

- 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 in 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.
- In November 2004 a brochure was published explaining the Board's Environmental Committee and its stewardship goals. It is available for distribution at industry meetings and to interested parties.
- In conjunction with the annual conference in December 2004, the *Seasonal Guide to Environmentally Responsible Pest Management Practices in Almonds* was distributed to those attending and also mailed directly to all almond growers. The Guide summarizes practices demonstrated in a 5-year project funded with Pest Management Alliance grants from the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (CDPR).
- Press release issued in February highlighted the bloom season and reinforced the environmentally friendly theme.
- February 2005 Media Tour held at Scott Hunter ranch, Livingston. The tour offered reporters the opportunity to view on-farm environmentally practices that are addressing air and water quality concerns. Representatives of harvesting equipment displayed their machines and explained how the industry is responding to the concerns over dust at harvest time. The media event generated coverage in the Valley press as well as key trade publications.
- April 2005 Newsletter published on the growing role the Endangered Species Act plays in use of crop protection tools by growers. At least 20 pesticides used by almond growers might be impacted by lawsuit decisions. Growers are educated about the ongoing process and how their management practices may be affected

by the Act. Key message reinforced that Almond Board is engaged in this issue and providing important data to the EPA and other key regulatory agencies.

- Grower field days co-sponsored by the Board and UCCE were held Dec. 7 in Bakersfield, Jan. 6 in Chico, Jan. 26 in Modesto, May 4 in Bakersfield and June 6 in Chico. All these events featured sections on environmental stewardship, with emphasis on impacts of pesticide spraying. The PMA Field Guide was distributed at all events.
- Press release issued June 14 emphasized that trends over the last ten years compiled from the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (CDPR) pesticide use reports confirm that the almond industry is embracing reduced risk orchard management.
- July 2005 Newsletter published on innovative harvest practices to reduce dust. Air-Way Farms General Manager Fred Olmstead was featured in this article discussing his company's commitment to investing in environmentally friendly farming practices.
- Media Placements: The newsletters and press releases have resulted in considerable coverage of the almond industry's environmental stewardship efforts. In particular, air and water quality have been high profile topics in the San Joaquin Valley. The outreach campaign has resulted in articles in the Modesto Bee, the Fresno Bee, Los Angeles Times, Associated Press, Ag Alert, Capital Press, Almond Facts, California Country and various other publications, as well as coverage by Valley television and radio stations.