Christmas Tree Grower Advisory Committee Meeting, June 27, 2019
WSDA Cleveland Lab, Tumwater, Washington

Present: (quorum present)

Bruce Wiseman (phone), Greg Hunter, Shelley Sprouffske, Chris Aldrich, Kristi Scholz O’Leary, Brad Tower, Troy Nichols
Absent: Alice Rockhill

WSU - Gary Chastagner, Thomas Whitney
WSDA - Cheryl Spink, Cindy Cooper, Lara Massey, Sven Spichiger (Pest Program)

Pest update:  Sven-Erik Spichiger, Managing Entomologist with WSDA Pest Program provided details on recent interceptions of Black Fir Sawyer beetle (*Monochamus galloprovincialis*) and the Brown Spruce Longhorn beetle (*Tetropium castaneum*). Black Fir Sawyer is native to Eurasia and attacks fir, larch, spruce, pine and birch. Vector for wood stain fungi which produce crown dieback. Brown Spruce Longhorn Beetle is native to Europe, Russia and Japan and prefers spruce, but also attacks firs, pines, and larches. Prefers stressed trees in native range, but attacks healthy trees here. Damage is from larval tunnels, but also associated with a new wood stain fungus for North America.

Dunnage with live specimens of these were intercepted by CBP in the port of Vancouver, WA. The dunnage was treated, and sent back with the shipper. WSDA is trapping the perimeter of the port as precaution. All traps to date are negative for these two pests.

Ongoing business:  License renewals are at 60 so far this year. 67 at this point last year. Bruce mentioned there are less U-cuts listed in his local paper. Discussion on identifying unlicensed growers: Shelley asked about upgrading/updating the Christmas tree licensing/Advisory Committee webpage to show the advantages of licensing, more info about the committee and feature the supported research. The new agency website may bring enhanced flexibility in design and ease of editing.

Legislative update - Brad Tower/Troy Nichols:  Licensing program renewed by the Legislature to 2030! Passed with no objections.

New L&I worker safety rules coming in late 2020. Tree farms are included due to chainsaw use. Not supposed to be significant changes. Intent is to restructure rather than increase burden on employers.

Graduated real estate excise tax goes into effect Jan 2020. There’s an exemption for undeveloped land, unsure whether would apply to tree farms.

Research update – Gary Chastagner/Thomas Whitney:

CoFirGE project – Trojan fir break bud early - first frost damage was April 30. Additional post harvest work is needed to confirm existing data results.

Twig weevil – Thomas Whitney, researcher with WSU, is researching this native beetle which attacks Douglas fir. Some anecdotal evidence that it’s now attacking noble fir. Trying to identify cause of host shift. (Mexico also has zero tolerance.) Thomas asked if licensed growers would be willing to allow a sampling survey of their trees. WSDA agreed to pass his flyer on to the licensed growers for volunteers. Project is sponsored by the Christmas Tree Promotion Board and USDA APHIS.
Effect of ethylene on needle retention: Gary related details and results of several projects in this area.

Christmas Tree Promotion Board: Gary related details of his project sponsored by the board.

Identifying Nordman fir with late bud break: Project with Chal Landgren, OSU.

Adjourned 12 pm

**Date of next meeting:** Wednesday, September 18, 2019, 10am Cleveland conference room.

**Possible topics:**
Potential partnerships with ODA; lack of distinction between state licensing program / Christmas Tree Promotion Board / Pacific NW Christmas Tree Association