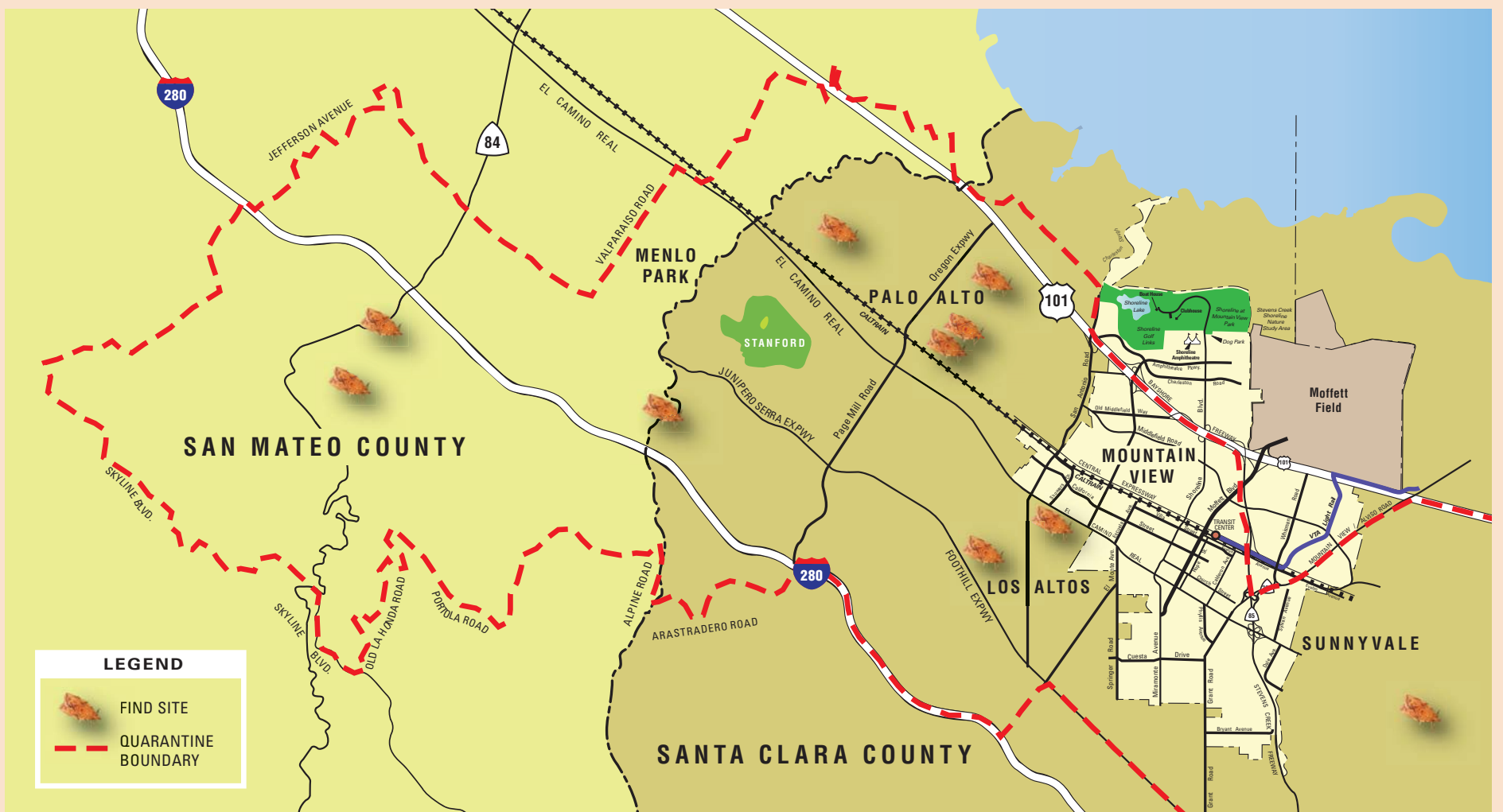


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MOUNTAIN VIEW VOICE



Stamping out the apple moth

CSA'S FOOD PROGRAM HIT BY QUARANTINE, BUT OFFICIALS SAY THE APPROACH IS WORKING

By Daniel DeBolt

A quarantine to contain the light brown apple moth, a pest discovered earlier this year, has been in effect in Mountain View for about five months now, frustrating backyard fruit and vegetable growers who want only to share their homegrown food.

The quarantine approach seems to be working, however, with only 12 moth finds in Santa Clara County since the first discovery in February. By comparison, thousands of moths have been found in neighboring Santa Cruz County, said deputy agricultural commissioner Kevin O'Day.

But it's not over yet: The most recent find came last week on De Anza Boulevard in Sunnyvale, roughly two miles east of the Mountain View border.

Under the quarantine, plants may not go from one property to another, even within the same neighborhood.

The problem has affected the Community Services Agency food program, which serves homeless and low-income local residents and relies on donated food from local fruit and vegetable growers.

"If you live in an area with the apple moth, we can't take your donation," explained Tom Myers, CSA's executive director.

That's frustrating for downtown resident Julie Lovins, who donates a large crop of persimmons every year from trees in her yard.

"That's not going to happen this year," Lovins said. "That is unfortunate, but there's nothing we can do about it."

The light brown apple moth, common in Australia, was first discovered in the East Bay in February. It has a broad appetite and will eat hundreds of plants, including fruits and vegetables.

The county has set traps and checks them on a weekly basis. In May, two moths were found on magnolia trees in Los Altos — one on Juanita Way and one on Marich Way. Although none has been found in Mountain View, the quarantine area extends at least a mile and a half from the find sites in Los Altos.

Myers said the CSA will make do without the produce, but added, "We'll be glad when the ban is lifted. It is always good to get those backyard homegrown donations."

Resident Sam Stevenson is among

many residents following the rule. He said he's wanted to give some of his homegrown tomatoes and beans to his local family members.

"I guess I'll have to forget that," he said. Stevenson said he had forgotten about the quarantine since the wave of coverage earlier this year.

"I'm sure other people have forgotten or assumed it was over," he said. "I think some reminder would be in order."

In the Monterey area, state officials are fighting the moth by using planes to spray a pheromone that causes male moths to think everything smells like a potential mate — ultimately preventing them from finding females. Officials claim the pheromone is harmless to humans compared to the malathion sprayed throughout California, including in Mountain View, in the 1980s to fend off the Mediterranean fruit fly.

No moth spraying has been announced

for Santa Clara County, though twist ties soaked in the pheromone have been placed in the Santa Theresa neighborhood of San Jose, O'Day said.

Mountain View's downtown farmers market is exempt from the quarantine. The city has no real agricultural operations that

would be affected. The farm on Grant Road and the Satake Nursery closed before the quarantine gathered steam earlier this year.

Last week's Sunnyvale find has prompted the county to temporarily change local

quarantine boundaries. The neighborhood between Grant Road and Highway 85 is now included, although the new boundaries have yet to be approved by the state.

Most of Mountain View is now in the quarantine, except portions east of Highway 85 and north of Highway 101.

For more information, visit www.cdfa.ca.gov or call the county division of agriculture at (408) 918-4600. ■



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