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State to stop funding program to fight pest

Light Brown Apple Moth

After initial aggressive response, no cases of insect harming crops

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Five years ago, after a retired University of California professor found a light brown apple moth in his Berkeley backyard, the state and federal government responded with a blitzkrieg.

Warning that the invasive pest could devastate California's farms, government officials fanned out across the Bay Area. In the fall of 2007, they used airplanes to spray wide areas of Santa Cruz and Monterey counties, sparking lawsuits and health complaints from residents.

Today, however, the state is quietly dropping funding for the program.

Money from the U.S. Depart-

ment of Agriculture will keep the program alive for at least another year. But Gov. Jerry Brown's proposed budget for the upcoming year eliminates the use of state general fund money for light brown apple moth research, inspection and control.

In 2008, the California Department of Food and Agriculture dropped plans to aerially spray counties across the Bay Area amid a public furor, and the population of the moths appears to have increased. Still, there have been no documented cases of significant damage to farms from the moth since then.

Environmental groups say state and federal agencies overreacted — and that the decision by California to stop funding the program is the clearest evidence of that yet.

"Five years ago, the light brown

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