

MOTH

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said Friday during a telephone briefing for reporters.

The "preferred alternatives" for controlling the moth, Leavitt says, are putting pheromone-laced twist ties on trees and releasing sterile moths, both of which throw off mating cycles. Spraying involves the aerial release of pheromones, which similarly disrupts reproduction.

Opposition group Stop the Spray East Bay was quick to express concern Friday. The state's latest report, the group said, does nothing more to limit the areas that can be sprayed, suggesting that places with up to a 100 people per square mile are still subject to the aerial treatments, but shouldn't be.

The light brown apple moth has been found in a

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dozen counties, with the greatest populations in Santa Cruz and San Francisco counties. State agricultural officials fear that without a control program, the moth will become a major problem for growers.

The agricultural community along Monterey Bay remains uncertain about the extent of the threat, yet concerned about trade restrictions a breakout of the apple moth could prompt. Dave Cavanaugh, a Pajaro Valley nursery owner, said Friday he hadn't yet read the state's new report, but said he and other growers would be looking at it carefully.

Some, including Santa Cruz County Supervisor Neal Coonerty, believe the threat of the moth has been

overstated.

"It's really unfortunate that they keep pushing this unnecessary activity on the citizens of Santa Cruz County and across California," Coonerty said Friday.

Earlier this week, the county's Board of Supervisors penned a letter to the state requesting public hearings on the new report.

Leavitt said Friday, however, that California law does not mandate any further hearings. The final environmental impact report, he said, was being reviewed by the state's secretary of agriculture and could be certified as soon as March 4.

The control program could commence at that point, he said.