



Todd Guild/Register-Pajaronian

ABOVE: Doug Guthrie, lead ground support for the LBAM Project, examines samples of trapped insects, likely light brown apple moths. **BELOW:** A sticky trap from a site in Santa Cruz County is shown with three moths, likely light brown apple moths.

LBAM

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The scientists and workers at the site are still engaged in “detection and pheromone work,” which involves using sticky traps to collect suspected moths for identification. They also use twist-tie devices on trees throughout the county, which emit a sexual pheromone over a 13-square-foot area and disrupts the male moths’ mating cycle, said Larry Hawkins, spokesman for the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

“Detection is one of the mainstays of our work,” Ferguson said.

Contrary to popular belief, the moth damages more than the leaves of plants. It can also infest a wide variety of fruit, likely rendering it unpalatable, and certainly unmarketable.

Last year, the project found LBAM larvae in raspberries from a Watsonville farm, she said.

Hawkins said the potential exists for the moth to spread throughout the state and devastate crops.

About 200 people throughout the state are at work on controlling the pests, 125 of whom are at the Watsonville location, said Jeffrey Meyer, a USDA sci-



entist studying the moth.

Meyer estimated that the project has found about 100 of the moths per day during the warmer months, and about 30 per day during the winter.

From the time the LBAM was first found in Santa Cruz County in 2007 to Jan. 2, the project has found 26,335 moths.

“I would certainly call this an infestation,” Meyer said.

Graydon-Fontana said that the state plans to continue using dangerous chemicals to combat the LBAM as soon as the state finishes the Environmental Impact Report. These pesticides include a mixture of the pheromones and the pesticide permethrin called “splat,”

and organic pesticides called spinosad and Bt. She was skeptical that the report would stop the application of pesticides.

“We don’t expect them to come out with an EIR that says the chemicals are dangerous,” she said.

Hawkins confirmed California is considering using the chemicals, but said it’s “pure speculation” to say which chemicals or delivery methods the state will use before the EIR comes out.

“All of those are being examined in the EIR,” he said. “Until it’s done, we won’t be doing any treatment, and there won’t be any aerial treatment over populated areas, period.”