



**San Joaquin Valley**  
**Agricultural Burning Assessment**  
February 25, 2021

# Agricultural Burning Background

- Agricultural practices generate large amounts of woody biomass
- Open burning is a cost-effective disposal method
- Commonly used for disease control
- San Joaquin Valley accounts for 36 percent of the State's burning (60 percent of harvested acres)



# Regulatory Background

- California law (HSC 39011) specifically allows for agricultural burning to address disease issues
- CARB Smoke Management Regulation dictates when agricultural burning can occur
- SB 705 (HSC 41855.5) calls for phasing out agricultural burning in the San Joaquin Valley
  - Includes criteria for postponing ban recognizing need for incentives

# SB 705 Criteria for Postponing Ban

1. No economically feasible alternative means of eliminating the agricultural waste
2. No long-term federal or State funding commitment for the continued operation of biomass facilities in the San Joaquin Valley or development of alternatives to burning
3. Continued issuance of permits for that specific category or crop will not cause, or substantially contribute to, a violation of an applicable federal ambient air quality standard
4. CARB concurs with the district's determinations



# Reducing Open Agricultural Burning

- District has progressively phased out burning for many categories since passage of SB 705
- All burning managed via District's Smoke Management System to reduce exposure
- Drought and loss of biomass plant capacity reversed some progress
- District has pursued alternatives including hosting summit and launching new incentive program to promote alternative practices

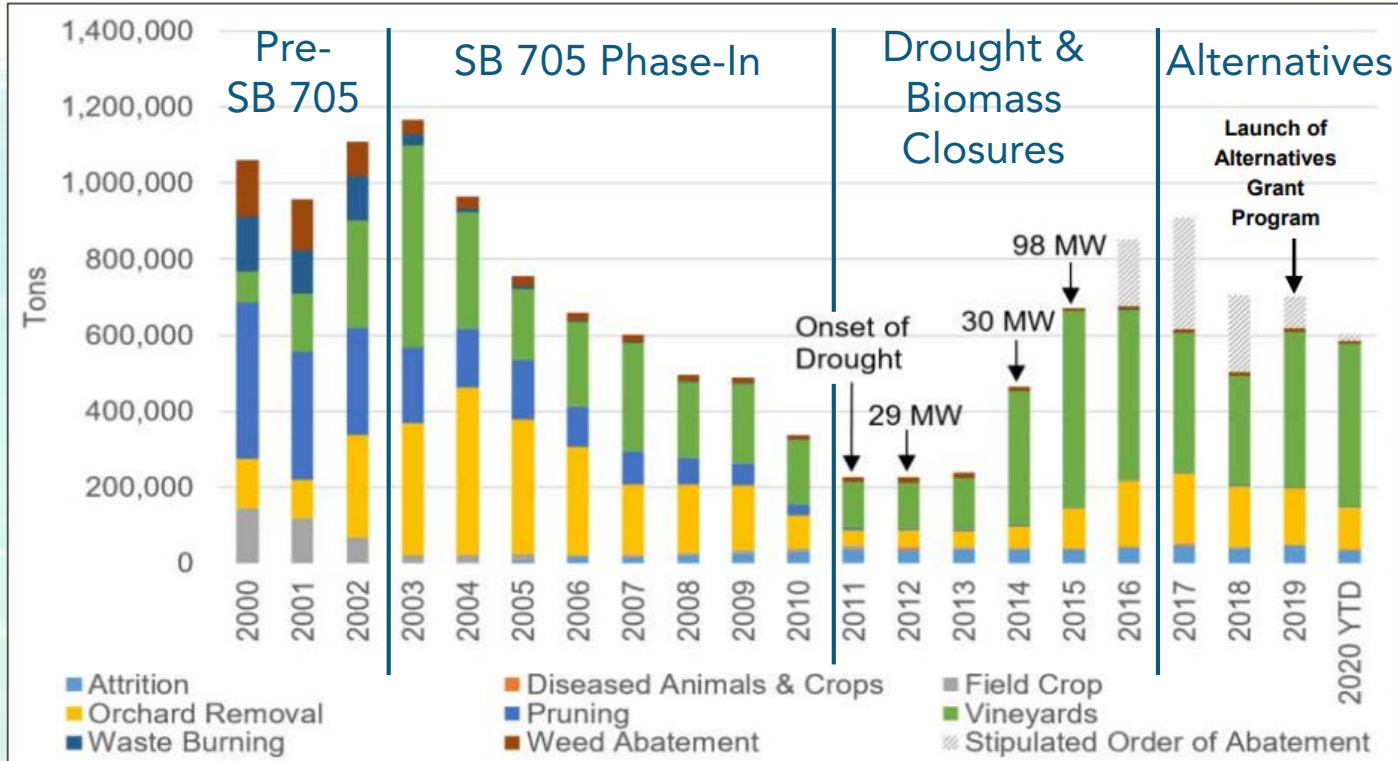


# Concurrence History

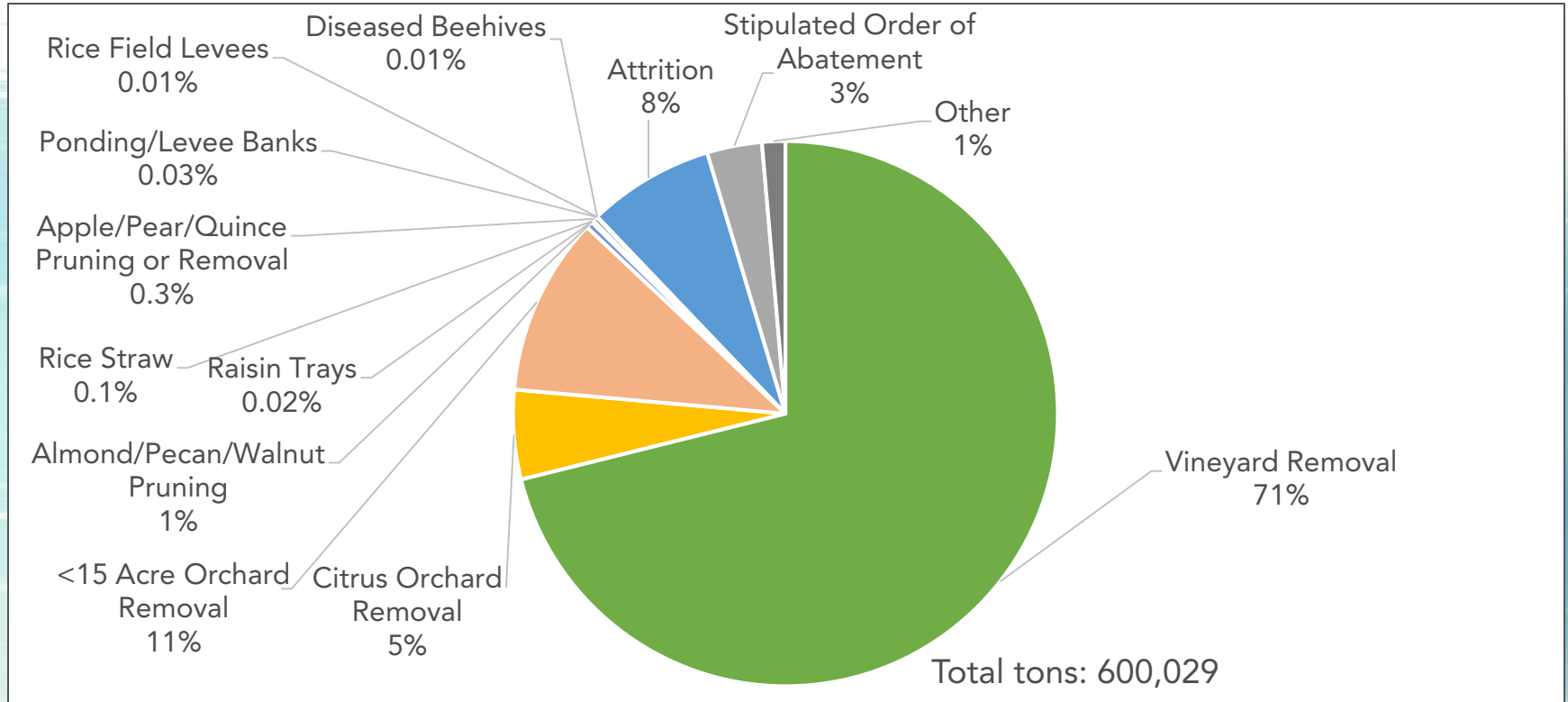
- CARB has historically concurred with the District's increasingly restrictive limits on allowable burning (in 2005, 2007, 2010, 2012, and 2015)
- CARB's previous concurrence expired December 31, 2020
- Temporary concurrence in effect January 3 – February 24, 2021



# Agricultural Burning Trends



# 2020 Tons Burned

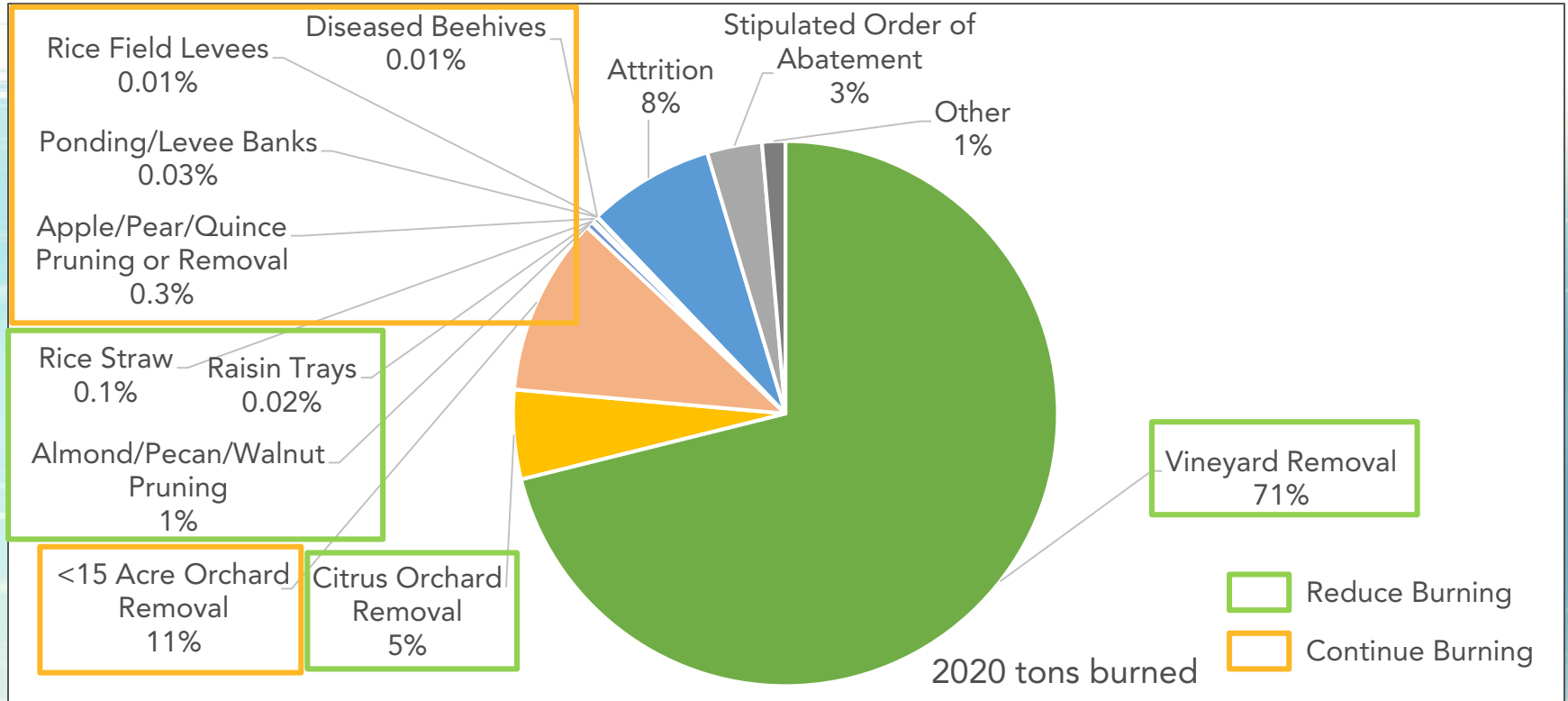




# District 2020 Report

- Adopted by District Board on December 17, 2020
  - Recommends additional stringency with phased-in prohibitions
  - Recommends postponement of prohibitions for certain crop categories and materials
  - Establishes framework for phase-out of ag burning through requested transitionary period by 2025
- Requests State incentive funding support
- Makes recommendations for State energy policy related to biomass disposal

# District 2020 Report Recommendations



# CARB Staff 2020 Concurrence Process

- Evaluated District 2020 Report including economic analysis and feasibility
- Considered implications of concurrence
- Posted staff assessment and recommendations

# Key Findings

- Considerable progress reducing agricultural burning since the passage of SB 705; 2020 Report is another significant step in the right direction
- District Alternatives to Agricultural Open Burning Incentive Pilot Program has been instrumental
- Partnerships can accelerate this transformation, paving a viable path to near-complete phase-out of agricultural burning

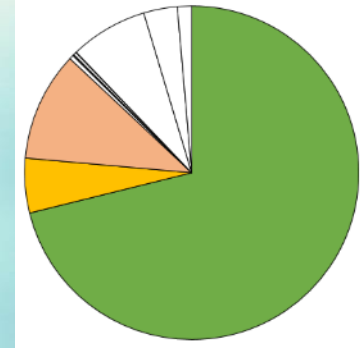
# Pathway to Phase-Out

- Build on the framework established in the District's 2020 Report
  - Accelerate timelines: Start with large agricultural operations while allowing more time for smaller agricultural operations to adjust
  - Set clear ton target as backstop for near-complete phase-out of burning by January 1, 2025
  - Need for collaboration on incentive funds and biofuel opportunities

# Vineyards and Citrus Orchards

## Including <15 Acre Projects

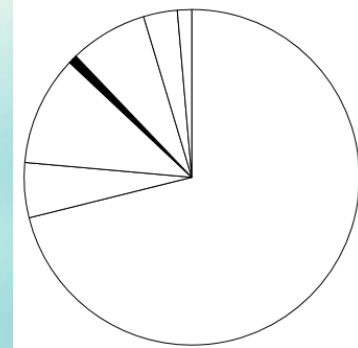
- Vineyard removals: Introduce prohibition on burning at large agricultural operations effective 2022, and phase in prohibitions for smaller operations
- Citrus orchard removals: In addition to the above, accelerate District proposed phase-out by one year



87 percent of  
2020 tons

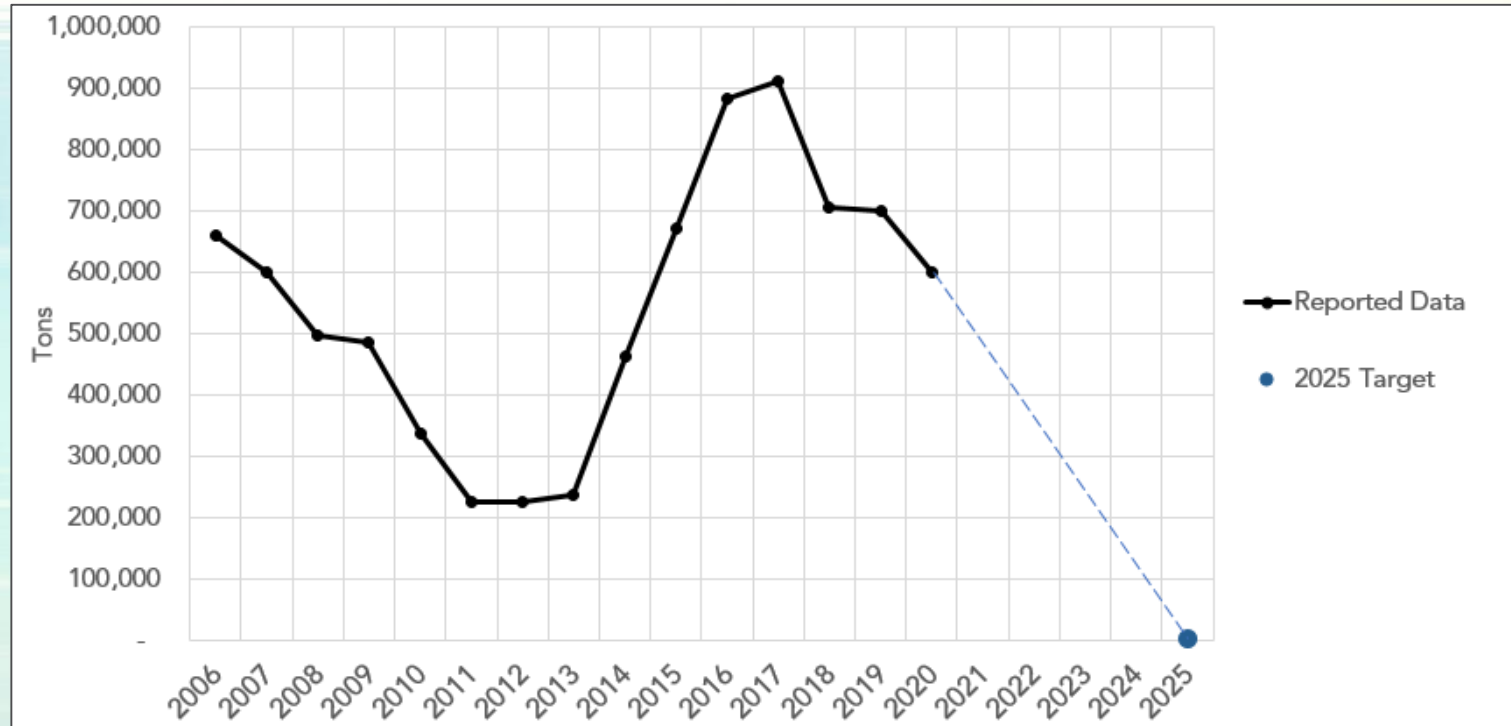
# Other Categories

- Concur with District recommendations for:
  - Surface harvested prunings (almond/walnut/pecan)
  - Raisin trays
  - Rice stubble (but decrease percentage burned)
  - Residual rice stubble and spot burning
  - Rice field levees and banks
  - Apple/pear/quince prunings and orchard removals
  - Weed abatement (ponding and levee banks)
  - Diseased beehives



2 percent of  
2020 tons

# Phase Out Agricultural Burning by 2025





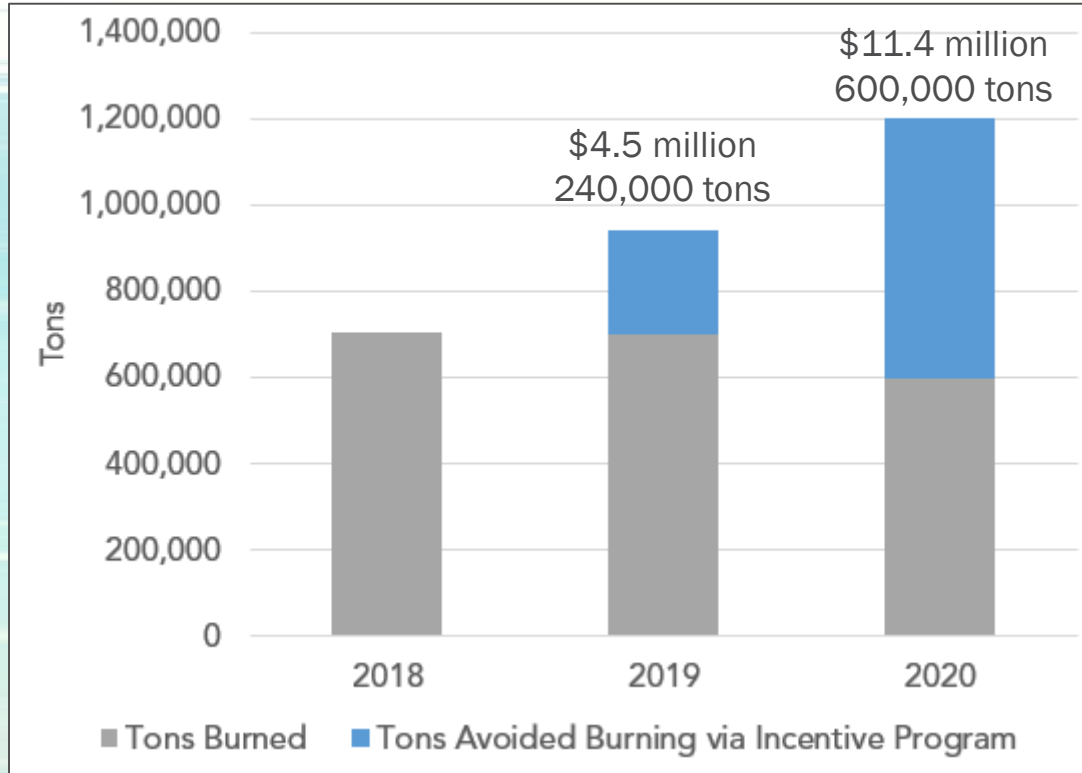
# Funding Sustainable Alternatives

- \$15-30 million annually for transition will support expanding access to alternatives
- Potential State, federal, and local sources of funding
- Opportunities for biofuel



Orchard grinding in Stanislaus County.  
(Brent Holtz/UCANR)

# District Alternatives Incentive Program



\$25 million in grants allocated to date,  
\$18 million executed

33,000 acres

900,000 tons of material avoided burning

# Transitional Readiness

Successful implementation built on strong partnerships with the District, agricultural stakeholders, and community:

1. Hold a summit on non-burning alternatives
2. Develop outreach materials and programs to identify alternatives to vineyard and orchard removals
3. Pursue a Clean Biomass/Bioenergy Collaborative
4. Pursue additional incentive funding from State and federal sources
5. Encourage the use of woody biomass in low-carbon uses

# CARB Staff Recommendations

Approve CARB Resolution 21-4

1. Recognizing the need for transitional period, concur with the District's burn prohibition postponements as set forth in the 2020 Report through August 31, 2021, and
2. Delegate authority to the Executive Officer to provide concurrence for an additional period beyond the first six-month concurrence period, through January 1, 2025, provided that the District implement additional measures, with CARB support

Staff will keep Board apprised of implementation with progress reports