

Texas Pecan Board

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Texas Pecan Board (TPB) Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 18, 2025 1:00 P.M. CST

Texas A&M University Horticulture Teaching Research & Extension Center
3199 County Rd 269 E Somerville, TX 77879

TPB Members Present: Jake Montz, Troy Swift, Dennis Hardman, Zachary Swick, Joseph Massey, Mark Friesenhahn

Guests: TPGA Staff/TPB Contractors: Blair Krebs, Meghan Mabry, Kelsey Wallis; Texas Department of Agriculture: Patrick Dudley; Texas A&M AgriLife: Kyle Slusher; James Livergood

Texas Pecan Board (TPB) President Jake Montz called the meeting to order at 1:00 P.M. CST. He called the board roll call, establishing a quorum, and asked guests to introduce themselves.

Texas Department of Agriculture representative Patrick Dudley swore in the newly elected or reelected Texas Pecan Board members, Troy Swift and Mark Friesenhahn. Dudley reminded the new or reelected members they need to complete the public information and open meeting act trainings and provide the certificate.

The next agenda item was to elect a Vice President after Rodney Myers left the board. Dennis Hardman made the motion to place Zachary Swick as Vice President for Texas Pecan Board. Troy Swift seconded the motion. All voted in favor except one dissenting vote from Zachary Swick. The motion passed and Swick now serves as Vice President.

Nominations for the vacant board member position were requested and there was some discussion on possible options for board members. Dennis Hardman made the motion to nominate Winston Millican for the vacant position. Zachary Swick seconded the motion, all voted in favor, and the motion passed. Millican will be seated for the next board meeting.

The board members reviewed the meeting minutes from the September 17, 2024 meeting in Stephenville. Troy Swift made the motion to approve the minutes. Mark Friesenhahn seconded the motion, all voted in favor, and the meeting minutes were approved.

Patrick Dudley from the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) then gave an update from the department about its work, including information on the penalty matrix and compliance agreements. Dudley reported that on February 28th the recommended changes were made to the penalty matrix for violation of the pecan weevil quarantine. The unit of measure for the penalty matrix for pecans will now be based on weight. He also spoke about the work being done on a bulk shipment compliance agreement, which is like the previous compliance agreement with phytosanitary certificates, but in regard to bulk bag loads of pecans. Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller has signed the agreement and they are now waiting on New Mexico Agricultural Commissioner, Jeff Witte, to sign and implement the agreement. The board wanted to see these updates presented at the TPGA Conference this summer, so growers have the necessary information.

Blair Krebs with the Texas Pecan Growers Association (TPGA) and contractor for TPB gave an update on the activities and finances for the organization. She informed the group about administrative, grant, and infrastructure work the team had been handling, including an update on weevil research, grant work, and elections. The financials were presented to the board. Zachary Swick made the motion to approve the presented financials and Joseph Massey seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the financials were approved. Troy Swift also made a motion to authorize he and Jake Montz to evaluate the bank balances with Blair Krebs and move funds to accounts that earn higher interest for the organization. Dennis Hardman seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

The next agenda item was a discussion on possible future marketing and promotion activities in the organization. Blair Krebs noted that TPB does not currently spend any funds towards promotion with the exception of grant activities. Krebs challenged the group to start thinking about how they would like to promote Texas Pecans. This would also include where to focus the promotions, such as direct to consumer or wholesale businesses. A working group of Zachary Swick, Winston Millican, and Dennis Hardman were assigned to work with the staff to develop marketing ideas to present at the July meeting. In the future, a formal committee handling marketing could be created.

The grant work for TPB was presented by Blair Krebs. The ACES grant, which focuses on international marketing, has completed a number of projects to promote Texas pecans in India, including a roasting guide and attendance at the MEWA trade show in Mumbai. Krebs also explained the Specialty Crop Block grant the staff applied for earlier in the year that focused on creating a Texas pecan brand and in-state promotions.

The discussion moved to the Texas Pecan Board compliance, audit expectations, and procedures with Patrick Dudley and Jake Montz giving an update. They have reviewed the documents on how the American Pecan Council handles their procedures. They noted they just need to sit down and work on it, and will work to get an update for the July board meeting. Mark Friesenhahn also volunteered to use his business as a sample audit.

The protocol for reported or know compliance was reviewed. Blair Krebs suggested a monthly email reminder to handlers for payment. Patrick Dudley noted he would send Krebs other letters that could be used as an example. The email can be reviewed by Troy Swift and Joseph Massey. Blair Krebs also noted that growers need to report to the staff if they paid into a handler and they know the handler did not pay into TPB.

The group got a short update on the suspected pecan weevil finding in El Paso County, relaying the information that was given at recent West Texas meeting in February. The West Texas group had hired a private pest scout to check and monitor cleaning plants in El Paso County and the suspected orchard. The protocol used was from the New Mexico Department of Agriculture. Now that TPGA's work has successfully gotten a new IPM Specialist in El Paso County, Jonathan Consford, the role of that monitoring and recording will fall to him.

The board then moved to the discussion on additional counties to monitor if pecan weevil is present, like the actions taken in Pecos County. The State of Texas has approved previous monitoring activities and removed those counties from the pecan weevil quarantine, but New Mexico has not. Texas AgriLife Entomologist Kyle Slusher noted that at least three years of monitoring and other steps were needed. Slusher noted he will work with the New Mexico Department of Agriculture entomologists to establish the proper protocol for removing a county out of the quarantine that New Mexico will approve, and will look to provide this information in July. From there the board will continue to work

towards the monitoring of pecan weevil in particular counties. There was also a little discussion on the \$70,000 in funding coming from the New Mexico Department of Agriculture into TPB, which the staff is still waiting on USDA-ARS formal agreement to be prepared and approved, so the funding can be moved. Unfortunately, with the change in politics, this process has been delayed.

The group also brought up other pests, such as stink bugs, that need to be studied. Blair Krebs noted the USDA-ARS entomology position that TPGA had worked to get has been placed on hold due to the political changes. Discussion with Kyle Slusher began on possible research he could be doing on stink bugs and the resources he would need to accomplish it. The board asked Slusher to provide further details in July.

The 2025 board meeting dates have been set for Sunday, July 20th in Denton during the TPGA Conference and tentatively for September 16th in Stephenville. The dates were shared with board members over email and during the meeting.

There was then an open floor discussion on the quality of pecans appearing on store shelves and what could be done. There was also dialog about board members who have not shown up to board meetings in quite some time, which makes it hard to establish a quorum. Board members present said they would reach out to the members that haven't attended to get an input from them.

With no further business, Troy Swift made the motion to adjourn the meeting, Mark Friesenhahn seconded the motion, all voted in favor, and the meeting was adjourned about 3:18 P.M. CST.

Respectfully submitted,

Blair Krebs