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assignment editors**

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Air District Receives \$178,200,000 in State Grant Funding for Phase-out of Open Agricultural Burning in the Valley

The Valley Air District Governing Board unanimously accepted \$178.2 million in new State funding directed to the San Joaquin Valley to launch an expanded grant program to assist farmers in phasing-out the open burning of woody waste through the use of new cleaner practices, including the chipping of material for incorporation into the soil and other cleaner alternatives.

After nearly two decades of significant work to reduce agricultural burning in the San Joaquin Valley, the District and the California Air Resources Board have approved a strategy that will result in a near complete phase-out of all Valley agricultural burning by January 1, 2025. To meet this deadline, the Air District has worked closely with agricultural stakeholders and leaders to bring new state funding to the Valley to help ensure that this phase-out is successful.

The \$178.2 million in state funding will be used to fund the District's *Alternatives to Agricultural Open Burning* Grant program on an expanded scale throughout the Valley. Originally launched by the District in 2018 as a pilot program, the *Alternatives to Agricultural Open Burning* Grant program provides financial incentives to agricultural operations to chip woody materials as an alternative to burning and helps to continue to improve air quality in the Valley.

With this new funding, the *Alternatives to Agricultural Open Burning* Grant program will be enhanced to provide additional funding for small agricultural operations of less than 100 total acres; expand funding options for vineyard removals; expand options for chipped material disposal through beneficial reuse alternatives such as mulch or compost; and provide an option to fund the purchase of new chipping equipment to be used within the Valley, amongst other program enhancements.

The District anticipates the new program to launch in early September 2021 and encourages interested agricultural operators in the San Joaquin Valley to learn more about this funding

and other available grants by visiting www.valleyair.org/grants or by calling program staff at 559-230-5800.