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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: March 27, 2015
Re: People v Magallon

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Pedro Villafan Magallon, age 46, of Newman, was held to answer on a felony charge of grand theft stemming from his theft of nine bee colonies on January 3, 2015.

Evidence presented at the preliminary hearing established that Orin Johnson of Hughson, a second generation beekeeper, was awakened in the early hours of January 3, 2015 by the security guards for the Diablo Grande golf course in Patterson. The guards had seen a suspicious vehicle in the rural area where Mr. Johnson kept several colonies of his bees. Dre Castano of Rank Investigations caught Pedro Villafan Magallon in the act of stealing Mr. Johnson's bee colonies. Magallon had already loaded 9 of the colonies into the truck he had driven onto the property. He had cut the barbed wire fence, bent it back and was loading up the bees. Magallon admitted to Sheriff Deputy Phillip Harris that he cut the fence, and was stealing the bees.

The defense argued that Magallon had no record and was very cooperative and deserved a reduction to misdemeanor charges. Chief Deputy District Attorney Annette Rees argued to the Judge how critical bees are to the agricultural industry here in Stanislaus County particularly the almond growers. According to Johnson's testimony, February and March are peak season for the bees and in January queens are growing and the hive is very active and valuable. He estimated their value at \$250 - \$300 per colony.

"Beekeepers are already under siege with Colony Collapse disorder and bee theft is at an all-time high. This is a very serious crime and should be treated as such. Especially here in Stanislaus County where agriculture is a significant growth product," argued Rees.

Attending the hearing were members of the California State Beekeepers Association who are very concerned about the treatment of bee theft cases in the Central Valley. Judge Linda McFadden agreed with the People's argument and held Pedro Magallon to answer for the felony charge. He will be arraigned on April 13, 2015 in Department 2.

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