

CALIFORNIA CITRUS PEST AND DISEASE PREVENTION COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, December 10, 2024

Committee Members Present:

Kevin Ball	John C. Gless	Roger Smith
Franco Bernardi	Kurt Metheny	Ram Uckoo
Aaron Dillon	Dr. Etienne Rabe	Keith Watkins

Committee Members Absent:

Brad Carmen	Jim Gorden	Mark McBroom
Rod Radtke		

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Staff:

Carl Baum	Anmol Joshi	David Phong
David Gutierrez	Lauren Murphy	Michael Soltero
Victoria Hornbaker	Keith Okasaki	Nilan Watmore

Guests:

Price Adams	Lisa Finke	Torun Nilwfer
Jim Cranney	Dr. Subhas Hajeri	Paige Shewmaker
Natalie DeAngelo Neal	Dan Kass	Ron Whitehurst
Jan Dietrick		

OPENING COMMENTS

Keith Watkins called the Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Committee (CPDPC) meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Keith Watkins welcomed the committee, staff, and members of the public participating. There was a quorum for the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Roger Smith shared remarks on behalf of Mark McBroom, noting the success of the program as an original committee member, but encouraged the committee to evaluate what has worked and what has been accomplished to guide their discussions, considering resources and investments needed.

Lisa Finke of the Canine Detection Services shared that her dogs are available for ACP scouting throughout the winter.

Ron Whitehurst of Rincon-Vitova Insectaries shared remarks regarding the ability for HLB to be cured/reversed, encouraging the use of a holistic, whole-systems approach that builds upon integrated pest management and biocontrol to control HLB and the ACP, as laid out in the Roadmap for Sustainable Pest Management, and passed out studies to consider as the committee fleshed out the strategic plan.

Nilufer Torun shared a letter on behalf of Patty Pagaling, executive director of Transition to Organics, encouraging the division to explore additional research in biocontrol strategies.

Jan Dietrick of Rincon-Vitova Insectaries echoed Ron's sentiment about prioritizing biocontrol as a method of controlling the spread of the ACP and HLB.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

The consent agenda contained the following items:

1. Minutes from the August 20, 2024 Committee meeting.

Motion: To approve the minutes on the Consent Agenda as presented.

First: Dr. Etienne Rabe

Second: Roger Smith

Motion Carries: The motion passed unanimously.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Service certificates for Bob Felts, Jr. and Craig Armstrong were provided for both their outstanding work and service on the CPDPC.

STRATEGIC PLANNING FACILITATED DISCUSSION

Strategic Plan Development and Input Review

Nuffer, Smith, Tucker (NST) presented a SWOT analysis of the division based on interviews with Committee members and additional stakeholders to fuel discussion of the division's strategic priorities. NST led the group in a review of elements of the division's current strategic plan, including the mission, vision, and strategic priorities. Discussion was held on recommended updates to be made to the mission, vision and strategic priorities for NST to utilize in the development of a new strategic plan. CDFA will then create specific work plans for each recommendation once the strategic plan is finalized.

Draft Mission

The division's mission was revised to reflect the following draft: To protect California's commercial citrus industry from invasive pests and diseases through the development and implementation of effective policies and regulations.

Draft Vision

The division's vision was revised to reflect the following draft: To keep California commercial citrus thriving in the face of emerging pest and disease threats.

Draft “North Star” for Huanglongbing

A “North Star” for Huanglongbing was determined as follows: Keep HLB from spreading in commercial groves.

Draft Strategic Priorities

Acknowledging each region in California has unique circumstances that can influence the division’s ability to achieve its vision, the committee recommended the following strategic priorities and that they be approached from a regional perspective, with recommendations on long- and short-term plans.

Strategic Priority: Suppress ACP Populations

Short-Term Recommendations:

- a. Develop a strategic ACP suppression plan tailored to each region.
 - Considerations should include:
 - a. ACP-infested vs. non-infested regions
 - b. Regional nuances (weather conditions, commodities grown, etc.)
 - c. Proximity to large commercial growing areas or dense residential areas
 - The suppression plan should clearly lay out specific actions and operational activities per region, including:
 - Tarping protocols and potential adjustments
 - If surveying/trapping activities should be adjusted in certain regions
 - Residential proximity to commercial citrus areas
 - Develop a clear definition and/or map of each “region”
 - The current ACP quarantine map may help serve as a guide for this development

Longer-Term Recommendations:

- b. Submit a request with Dr. Bodil Cass and work to identify organic ACP treatment options for effective suppression within HLB quarantine zones.

Strategic Priority: Detect and eradicate HLB-diseased trees

Commercial Groves:

Short-Term Recommendations:

- a. Collaborating with USDA, develop a commercial HLB response plan with a regional approach, including:
 - A clear definition of what the “tipping point” looks like for HLB infestation in commercial groves
 - Approaches should include recommendations for treatments, tree removal, delimitation surveys and sampling, etc.
- b. Develop recommendations for non-regulatory sampling opportunities for industry members to consider.
- c. Determine the implications of what a statewide HLB quarantine may look like for California and evaluate the pros and cons, including:
 - Impacts on the import of nursery stock and/or fruit into California from other states under a statewide quarantine.

Longer-Term Recommendations:

- d. Collaborate with USDA to determine opportunities around changes to existing federal requirements, including:
 - Mandatory tree removal in commercial groves (see “tipping point” definition above)
 - Reduction of quarantine area (less than 5-mi.)
 - Defining metrics for the expiration of HLB- and ACP-quarantine areas (see Priority C)
- e. Review the recent adjustments made to the commercial risk-based survey and evaluate what areas may need to be adjusted to accurately reflect the current HLB environment in California and other considerations mentioned above (i.e., regional HLB response plan approach).
 - Consider outreach implications if growers are identified to be in high-risk areas (align with Strategic Priority D)
- f. Evaluate opportunities for PCDs to support survey/trapping or other activities.

Residential Areas:

Short-Term Recommendations:

- a. Develop a strategic HLB response plan tailored to unique residential scenarios/geographies, taking into consideration proximity to commercial groves and “hot spots” of HLB infections.
 - Work to define:
 - What is considered “near” a commercial grove?
 - How a “hot spot” would be quantified?
 - How would a “buffer area” around a commercial grove be measured?
 - Plans should consider a strategic IPM approach (particularly in “hot spot” areas), and varying delimitation areas

Longer-Term Recommendations:

- b. Review the recent adjustments made to the residential risk-based survey and evaluate what areas may need to be adjusted to accurately reflect the current HLB environment in California and other considerations mentioned above (i.e., regional HLB response plan approach).
 - The following definitions determined above should be considered: proximity to commercial groves, hot spot areas and buffer area measurements

Strategic Priority: Control movement of psyllids around the state; enforce regulations

Short-Term Actions

- a. Evaluate current mitigations for bulk citrus movement and determine opportunities for regional adjustments to allow for ease of fruit movement while

accounting for regional risk factors (i.e., moving from a low-risk area to a high-risk area, and vice versa).

- b. Develop a list of pros and cons for a regionalized approach for tarping mitigations regarding bulk citrus movement across the state, considering the following:
 - What enforcement challenges will be presented?
 - Merits of post-processing/packed fruit and tarping
 - Cost analysis

Longer-Term Actions

- c. In collaboration with USDA, define metrics for expiration of ACP-quarantine areas (see Priority B).
- d. Evaluate the current nursery regulations within an HLB-quarantine zone (i.e., tree sales to residents) and discuss the implications of lessening or adjusting.

Strategic Priority: Outreach and Collaboration

Short-Term Actions

- a. Develop an approach for the reorganization of regional Grower Liaisons and how current Grower Liaison responsibilities may be transferred to other entities, including:
 - Movement of responsibilities to CDFA staff
 - Movement of regional grower communications to PCDs, task forces, packinghouses and other industry partners
 - Movement of regional Grower Liaison responsibilities to one statewide Grower Liaison (following a similar format to Pierce's Disease)

Longer-Term Actions

- b. Align the Division's outreach plan and contractor activities to mirror the outcomes of the other Strategic Priorities, as needed.
 - Explore additional tactics for engaging with ag-focused organizations, including nurseries, Ag in the Classroom and others.

Strategic Priority: Operational Excellence

Short-Term Actions

- a. Evaluate the implications of moving back to a "program" and no longer operating as a "division," including:
 - A cost analysis/economic evaluation
 - Impacts to how being a "program" would affect or change the Division's current operations, including:
 - What would it look like if the division was absorbed under the Plant Health and Pest Prevention Services Division? PDEP?
- b. Identify new options and/or improve accounting systems to monitor fiscal spending.
- c. Continue efforts to improve communications with Committee members, including clarity on what staff needs from the committee, providing access to key program data via dashboards and other updates.

- d. Create an official onboarding process and responsibilities document for new Committee members, which may include:
 - Committee meeting responsibilities
 - Managing expectations for state operations and processes
 - Division staff may work with the outreach contractor for support in the development

Longer-Term Actions

- e. Once the Strategic Plan is finalized, evaluate the structure, membership and governance of the Committee in full to ensure operational efficiencies.
- f. Identify what the “tipping point” for the ACP and HLB may be for when the division’s current regulatory authority is no longer needed, and a full restructure of the division’s Action Plan and/or Committee structure may occur.
 - Consider: What would be the implications of becoming a non-governmental, quasi-marketing order (similar to Citrus Research Board) and what milestones would need to be met to realize a benefit?

It was agreed upon by the group that CDFA staff will incorporate the Science Subcommittee Technical Review Team Action Items into the strategic plan and make key action items ladder up to the strategic priorities. Staff will identify anything that doesn’t neatly fit in or overflows and will circle back on how to incorporate it.

The plans, as recommended by the Committee, will be distributed via email by NST for additional feedback and input from committee members.

OTHER ITEMS, CLOSING COMMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.