

CALIFORNIA CITRUS PEST AND DISEASE PREVENTION COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 14, 2025

Committee Members Present:

Kevin Ball	Jim Gorden	Jason Reynolds*
Brad Carmen	Jose Lima*	Roger Smith
Aaron Dillon	Mark McBroom	Jeff Steen
Jay Gillette*	Kurt Metheney	Dr. Ram Uckoo
John C. Gless	Dr. Etienne Rabe	Keith Watkins

Committee Members Absent:

Franco Bernardi	Rod Radtke
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California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Staff:

Deborah Ayala*	Luci Kumagai*	Alisha Rios*
Carl Baum	Zack McCormack*	Michael Soltero*
Dr. Ravneet Behla*	Dahmoon Maesomy*	Ned Thimmayya*
Joe Damiano	Ivan Milosavljevic	ThuyVy Truong*
Traci Mae Ducusin*	Jana Miscevic*	Fabian Velasco*
Paul Figueroa	Alex Muñiz	Nilan Watmore
Victoria Hornbaker*	Lauren Murphy*	Jennifer Willems*
Anmol Joshi	Keith Okasaki	Jason Wu*
Sarah Kraft*	David Phong*	

Guests:

Price Adams*	Dr. Dhiraj Gautam*	Mia Neunzig*
Dr. Bodil Cass	Dr. Saurabh Gautam*	Margaret O'Neill
Dr. Rob Clark*	Ariana Gehrig*	Dr. Sandra Olkowski*
Casey Creamer	Dr. Subhas Hajeri	Cressida Silvers*
Melissa Cregan*	Dr. Melinda Klein*	Dr. Georgios Vidalakis
Lisa Finke	Marcy Martin	Helene Wright*
Michael Frantz	Dr. Joey Mayorquin*	Sandra Zwaal*

**Attended the meeting virtually.*

1. CALL TO ORDER, WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

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 in person and online, including Joe Damiano as the new Interim Director for Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Division (CPDPD).

2. ROLL CALL

With 15 out of 17 committee members present, there was a quorum for the meeting.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mia Neunzig of the Alliance of Pest Control Districts (APCD) read a letter prepared by APCD Chairman John Fisher IV. The APCD represents about 79% of California's commercial citrus acreage and over 70% of their \$3 million budget is dedicated to HLB efforts, having pivoted almost entirely from citrus tristeza virus. The APCD is eager to collaborate with the CPDPC, CDFA, and other stakeholders on Asian citrus psyllid (ACP)/Huanglongbing (HLB) management to optimize citrus industry resources and enhance program efficiency.

Dr. Etienne Rabe stated that a tremendous amount has been learned over the last 17 years, leading to "HLB fatigue" in the industry and zero grower participation in the program. If the goal is to keep HLB out of commercial groves, there should be representation of Pest Control Districts (PCDs) on the CPDPC. There seem to be duplicative assessments between the CPDPC and PCDs and those need to stop. The money spent on tree removal in Southern California is wasteful as it's only equivalent to about 15% of the state's commercial acreage. The biggest danger is human-aided movement with a silver lining that the state's Mediterranean climate will prevent spread, unlike other regions of the world. The focus this year should be to (1) reduce grower assessments, (2) concentrate activities more around commercial citrus, and (3) get PCDs involved. In addition, it would be good to revisit having the CPDPC as a program within the Plant Health Division at CDFA.

Roger Smith responded by mentioning several CPDPC members having ties to PCDs and there is grower involvement. Keith Okasaki mentioned that CPDPC's commodity survey in groves had minimal refusal rates, suggesting that grower participation and involvement is present.

Victoria Hornbaker clarified that Food and Ag Code section 5914 dictates CPDPC representation (14 producers, 1 public member and 2 nurseries) and that it would need to be changed to specify direct PCD involvement. CDFA has delegated authority from USDA to establish quarantines for "A-rated" pests and diseases. CDFA staff have been and are willing to continue to provide updates to PCDs on program activities. HLB detections in Arizona has resulted in a 10-mile quarantine zone.

Michael Frantz of Franz Nursery mentioned that there hasn't been an issue in the past with the lack of ability to sell retail plants in quarantine zones. However, the circumstances in Southern California have significantly changed. Major investments have been made for screenhouses (Franz Nursery put in first of its kind screenhouse structure that cost \$1.5 million). There is support for the proposal to allow for sale of clean, regulated citrus inside HLB quarantine zones.

4. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

The consent agenda contained the following items:

a. Minutes from February 26, 2025 Committee Meeting

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

First: Mark McBroom

Second: Kevin Ball

Motion Carries: The motion passed with 12 yays (Kevin Ball, Brad Carmen, Aaron Dillon, John C. Gless, Jim Gorden, Jose Lima, Mark McBroom, Kurt Metheny, Etienne Rabe, Roger Smith, Ram Uckoo, and Keith Watkins), and 3 abstentions (Jay Gillette, Jason Reynolds, and Jeff Steen).

5. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

a. Welcome New Board Members

Keith Watkins welcomed the new committee members – Jay Gillette, Jose Lima, Jeff Steen, and Jason Reynolds.

b. Timing of Officer Elections

Motion: To approve amending the Committee By-Laws by amending Article IV, Section 3, to change the end of term date for committee members from September to after the first meeting of the following calendar year.

First: Mark McBroom

Second: Roger Smith

Motion Carries: The motion passed unanimously.

c. Subcommittee Review and Restructuring

Motion: To approve amending the Committee By-Laws by eliminating Article III, Section 1.a.2. to remove the Outreach Subcommittee and for outreach updates to be provided to the Operations Subcommittee, established under Article III, Section 1.a.4.

First: Mark McBroom

Second: Etienne Rabe

Motion Carries: The motion passed unanimously.

Price Adams of Nuffer, Smith, Tucker requested a single point of contact be maintained to collaborate with and coordinate on outreach efforts. Aaron Dillon agreed to serve in this capacity.

6. FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

a. Review 2024/2025 Budget Expenditures and Revenue

Carl Baum reported that Fiscal Year (FY) 23-24 expenditures have closed. After all encumbrances cleared, year-to-date expenditures were \$36,100,881.

Carl reported that year-to-date revenue received for the 23-24 crop year was \$18,036,377 with 200,404,189 cartons assessed.

Carl reported that FY 24-25 expenditures in January were \$3,236,832 and expenditures in February were \$2,881,387, bringing the total year-to-date expenditures to \$22,249,418. The goal to break even with cash-flow is right around \$33 million by June 30, 2025. Expenditures to date for the Ventura County HLB Emergency-Fund were \$272,252, leaving a remaining balance of \$1,163,746. CPDPD will likely spend an additional \$1 million while returning the remaining \$436,200 due to difficulty of hiring seasonal staff in the region. Expenditures to date to the Citrus Yellow Vein Clearing Virus (CYVCV) Federal Fund for detections in Los Angeles County were \$250,000 with no remaining balance. Expenditures to date for PPA 7721 Outreach funds were \$97,495, leaving a remaining balance of \$49,749.

Carl reported that year-to-date revenue received as reported at December 2024 meeting increased by \$3,936,750 to a total of \$8,590,852 in January 2025.

b. 2025/2026 Budget Proposal

Carl Baum stated that the proposed FY 25-26 budget for CPDPD is \$33,083,755. The total proposed budget consists of three funding sources: the state General Fund, Federal Funds (Citrus Health Response Program (CHRP) and PPA 7721), and the Agriculture Fund (grower assessments). CPDPD will exhaust \$4,423,820 in General Funds to cover personnel, salary, benefits and indirect costs. CPDPD is estimated to spend \$11,662,512 from the Federal CHRP agreement to cover expenses not including personnel, treatment, and tree removal. CPDPD will exhaust \$230,000 from the Federal PPA 7721 Public Outreach agreement. Based on a five-year annual average of 191 million citrus cartons produced at the current \$0.09 per-carton assessment rate, CPDPD estimates the Ag Fund will receive \$17,216,950 in revenue. CPDPD is estimated to spend \$16,667,423 from the Ag Fund to cover all other costs not billable to CHRP. Assuming CPDPD breaks even by June 30, 2025, there is an estimated surplus of \$549,527 by June 30, 2026.

Keith Okasaki reported the breakdown of the proposed FY 25-26 CPDPD budget. The Northern District budget is estimated to be \$4,681,920 (14%) and includes support for Division-wide activities such as outreach, grower liaisons, and CRB. The Central District budget is estimated to be \$7,187,971 (22%) and the Southern District budget is estimated to be \$7,452,143 (23%). In addition, CPDPD has

budgets for Administration – \$1,856,500 (6%), Biocontrol – \$1,780,584 (5%), and Regulatory – \$3,792,335 (11%).

Motion: To approve the proposed Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget of \$33,083,755.

First: Roger Smith

Second: Etienne Rabe

Motion Carries: The motion passed with 13 yays (Kevin Ball, Brad Carmen, Aaron Dillon, Jay Gillette, Jim Gorden, Jose Lima, Kurt Metheny, Etienne Rabe, Jason Reynolds, Roger Smith, Jeff Steen, Ram Uckoo, and Keith Watkins), 1 nay (John C. Gless), and 1 abstention (Mark McBroom).

7. OPERATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

a. Strategic Priority 1 – Find and Eradicate HLB

i. Laboratory Update

Lucita Kumagai presented the laboratory update for the HLB testing program from the Plant Pest Diagnostics Center. She reported that to date in 2025, the lab received an average of 6,107 plant samples and 594 ACP samples per month for a combined total of 26,805 total samples. Of the received samples, *Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus* (CLas) was detected on 402 properties which included 663 positive trees and 31 CLas-positive ACP.

Etienne Rabe inquired about the capacity of the labs (both CDFA and CRB) to process samples. Marcy Martin stated that CRB has the capacity to increase processing samples fivefold. Lucita Kumagai stated that the CDFA lab lost two full-time positions and one seasonal position without the ability to backfill. The CDFA lab currently has five full-time technicians, two seasonals and two scientists processing about 5,000 plant samples per month at full capacity.

ii. Multi-Pest Survey

David Phong presented data for 2025 Multi-Pest Survey Cycle 1 using the online dashboard that is updated weekly. Cycle 1 2025 began in May 2025 and is 8 percent complete with a completion goal of October 2025. Approximately 5,600 properties were visited, generating 819 entomology and 1,200 plant samples.

iii. CDFA Operational Update

Southern District – There were four HLB-positive trees found in the Valley Center area of San Diego. All the trees have been removed. The detection expanded the quarantine by 85 square miles, which includes about 2,400 acres of commercial citrus. Delimitation surveys and treatments within a 250-

meter radius of find sites are ongoing along with coordinated grower information meetings. Since the last committee meeting, there have been 180 positive trees detected across Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego counties. 152 trees have been removed with 385 cumulative trees still pending removal.

Central District – Detection trapping is ongoing. Biocontrol releases continue in Ventura County as well as commodity survey in groves and multi-pest surveys on residential properties. In Ventura County, 1,088 properties around the Santa Paula area have been treated. Of the 95 identified positive trees, 88 have been removed. Warrants have been issued for the remaining refusal properties.

Northern District – Winter trapping is complete and year-round trapping in San Joaquin, Placer and Stanislaus counties is ongoing. In Santa Clara County, reduced delimitation trapping (by half) is ongoing. Since February 26, 2025, 21 ACP were detected in Santa Clara County with 1 detection in Morgan Hill. CDFA staff are planning to treat in this new satellite infestation area. Biocontrol releases continue in Santa Clara County. Multi-pest survey for cycle 2 2024 is complete and staff have begun on cycle 1 2025 focusing on areas that pathways, farmers markets and proximity to commercial citrus (Stanislaus, San Joaquin, Placer).

b. Strategic Priority 2 – Control ACP Movement and Enforce Regulations

i. CDFA Regulatory and County Agreement Update

Keith Okasaki reported that CDFA contracts with County Ag Commissioners in citrus-producing and/or -receiving counties. Counties continue to identify and address issues with fruit being improperly moved between quarantine areas, preventing the possible spread of ACP and HLB. There has been greater emphasis placed on flea market, peddler, and fruit seller inspections.

ii. HLB Retail Nurseries

Keith Okasaki stated that the Secretary requested the CPDPC revisit the proposal to allow the sale of clean citrus nursery stock in HLB quarantine zones. The proposal was previously rejected at the February 2025 CPDPC meeting.

Keith reported that there are 2,630 square miles of HLB quarantine in 6 Southern California counties. There are currently 12 approved structures within the HLBQ. Outside of these nurseries, there is no sale of citrus. The growing void of available clean citrus stock leads to illegal importation,

propagation and sale of citrus plant which increased risk of pest introduction – not just HLB, but also fruit flies, citrus canker and others.

Motion: To accept the recommendation for allowing the sale of citrus nursery stock within the Huanglongbing (HLB) quarantine as proposed.

First: Jim Gorden

Second: Aaron Dillon

Motion Carries: The motion did not pass with 6 yays (Aaron Dillon, Jay Gillette, Jim Gorden, Jose Lima, Roger Smith, and Keith Watkins), 5 nays (Kevin Ball, Brad Carmen, John C. Gless, Mark McBroom, and Kurt Metheny), and 4 abstentions (Etienne Rabe, Jason Reynolds, Jeff Steen, and Ram Uckoo).

Michael Franz suggested approval of a pilot program so that data could be collected on the number of trees sold into the HLB quarantine to determine long-term viability of the proposal.

Motion: To accept the recommendation for allowing the sale of citrus nursery stock in a limited eighteen-month program within the HLB quarantine of Los Angeles and Orange Counties in the areas deemed as de-emphasized per CPDPC strategic planning to evaluate the program's systems approach.

First: Roger Smith

Second: Aaron Dillon

Motion Carries: The motion passed with 11 yays (Kevin Ball, Aaron Dillon, Jay Gillette, Jim Gorden, Jose Lima, Kurt Metheny, Etienne Rabe, Jason Reynolds, Roger Smith, Jeff Steen, and Keith Watkins), 3 nays (Brad Carmen, John C. Gless, and Ram Uckoo), and 1 abstention (Mark McBroom).

c. Strategic Priority 3 – ACP Control/Suppression

i. Biocontrol Update

No update provided.

8. SCIENCE SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

Strategic Priority 4 – Improve Data Technology, Analysis and Sharing

a. Ethyl Formate Registration Update

Dr. Etienne Rabe reported that the ethyl formate registration should be approved within the next two weeks by US Environmental Protection Agency. The Department of Pesticide Regulation doesn't have an estimate for approval in California but are in the last stages of review.

b. Region-Specific ACP/HLB Working Group Updates

Dr. Rabe provided an overview of the results from the working group broken up into eight regions: (1) Northern California, (2) San Joaquin Valley, (3) Central Coast, (4) Southern Coast, (5) San Bernardino/W. Riverside, (6) Los Angeles/Orange, (7) the Desert, and (8) San Diego. Each of these regions were evaluated for nine activities which could potentially be conducted by Pest Control Districts: (1) HLB and CLas+ ACP detection response, (2) ACP detection response – commercial, (3) ACP detection – residential, (4) biocontrol – commercial, (5) biocontrol – residential, (6) commodity survey, (7) grove trapping, (8) residential multi-pest survey, and (9) residential trapping.

Victoria Hornbaker mentioned that the ACP/HLB plan is the best place to start to determine requirements and costs to meet those requirements. A Scope of Work developed as part of a contract cannot be shared before a proposal goes out to bid.

Motion: To accept the recommendation that by July 9, 2025, CDFA provide a Scope of Work and associated CDFA costs for commercial grove trapping, commercial commodity survey, and commercial Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) treatment response in the San Joaquin Valley and Imperial County regions to determine if Pest Control Districts can accomplish these tasks.

First: Etienne Rabe

Second: Jeff Steen

Motion Carries: The motion passed unanimously.

c. HLB Hot-Spot Working Group Update

David Phong stated that the working group was tasked with providing a recommendation on how to determine when an area becomes a “hot spot”, whereby the program can look at optimizing resources. Another task of the working group is to determine how big an area the Ag-urban interface should be in relation to proximity of commercial citrus. The working group convened a few times with a goal of developing a report and findings by the end of June. The findings will be presented to the Science Subcommittee.

d. PCD Working Group Update

Keith Okasaki reported that several meetings were held with Pest Control Districts to identify capacity to conduct various activities including multi-pest survey, commercial grove trapping in the Central Valley and possibly outreach. Staff are working to develop a Scope of Work and following state contract regulations as these discussions continue.

9. OUTREACH SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

a. Outreach Update

Aaron Dillon inquired about PPA 7721 funding deadlines for FY 2026. The request for proposals is open through July 2025.

Price Adams mentioned that Nuffer, Smith, Tucker is keeping track of application deadlines for PPA 7721 funding.

Keith Okasaki mentioned NST is helping with the continuation hearings to be held in Riverside, Ventura, and Visala the first week of June, followed by a virtual continuation hearing the following week.

b. Grower Liaison Discussion

Discussion to be moved to the next Operations Subcommittee meeting.

10. USDA REPORT

Helene Wright reported that cooperative agreements are undergoing further scrutiny with the new administration, which isn't uncommon. The CHRP agreement is expected to provide \$12.1 million to CDFA, about \$300,000 less than the previous year. Travel restrictions have been implemented, impacting the ability to attend meetings in person. There has also been a reduction in staff, but most don't involve the citrus program.

11. CCM REPORT

Nothing to report.

12. CRB REPORT

Marcy Martin reported on the CRB Laboratory and its contributions to both the industry and CDFA. The CRB lab is under-utilized and costs only \$225,000 a year.

13. SJV PCD REPORT

Dr. Saurabh Gautam reported that winter trapping in the northern territory (Fresno and Tulare Counties) was conducted on 401 sites. In the southern territory (Kern County), trapping was conducted on 404 sites. Most sites are near packinghouses which are high-risk areas for ACP introduction. There are also sites near weigh stations, truck stops, and major transportation corridors, including 31 sites along Highway 126 in Ventura, 17 sites near Fort Tejon/Highway 58, and 6 sites near

Kettleman City. Traps were serviced a total of 355 times in these areas and ACP were detected near Highway 126 and at a CHP weigh station on Interstate 5 in Santa Clarita (Los Angeles County). In addition, multi-pest inspection is conducted with use of canine teams (ACP detection dogs) provided by Lisa Finke. To date 41 blocks have been surveyed (4,100 trees) and 160 trees have been tested for CLAs, which all produced negative results.

14. OTHER ITEMS, CLOSING COMMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m. The next meeting will be on July 9, 2025 in Ventura or Santa Clarita, California.