

CALIFORNIA CITRUS PEST AND DISEASE PREVENTION COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 17, 2025

Committee Members Present:

Kevin Ball	Jim Gorden	Jason Reynolds
Franco Bernardi*	Jose Lima	Roger Smith*
Brad Carmen	Mark McBroom*	Dr. Ram Uckoo
Aaron Dillion*	Kurt Metheney	Keith Watkins
Jay Gillette*	Dr. Etienne Rabe	
John C. Gless*	Rod Radtke	

Committee Members Absent:

Jeff Steen

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Staff:

Carl Baum	Lauren Murphy*	Claudia Vazquez
Paul Figueroa*	Keith Okasaki	Nilan Watmore
Anmol Joshi	David Phong*	Jennifer Willems*
Lucita Kumagai*	Grace Radabaugh*	Jason Wu*
Dahmoon Maeesomy*	Ned Thimmayya*	
Alex Muñiz*	ThuyVy Truong*	

Guests:

Price Adams*	Julia Inestroza*	Mia Neunzig*
Dr. Rob Clark*	Hailey Jones*	Margaret O'Neill*
Casey Creamer*	Dr. Melinda Klein*	Dr. Sandra Olkowski*
Dr. Dhiraj Gautam*	Jessica Leslie*	Judy Zaninovich*
Dr. Saurabh Gautam*	Jasmine Lopez*	Sandra Zwaal*
Christopher Greer*	Marcy Martin*	
Dr. Subhas Hajeri	Dr. Neil McRoberts*	

**Attended the meeting virtually.*

1. CLOSED SESSION

Eradication Activities in Commercial Groves (Gov. Code, § 11126, subd. (e)(1).)

2. CALL TO ORDER, WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Keith Watkins called the Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Committee (CPDPC) meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. Keith welcomed the committee, staff, and members

of the public participating in person and online. Keith introduced Claudia Vazquez, the new Director of the Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Division (CPDPD).

3. ROLL CALL

With 16 out of 17 committee members present, there was a quorum for the meeting. Jeff Steen was not in attendance.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments were received.

5. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

The consent agenda contained the following items:

a. Minutes from July 9, 2025 Committee Meeting

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

First: Rod Radtke

Second: Kevin Ball

Motion Carries: The motion passed unanimously.

6. EXECUTIVE SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

a. Set 2026 Meeting Calendar

Keith Watkins proposed the 2026 Meeting Calendar for the Full Committee, and Executive and Operations Subcommittee meetings. The Science Subcommittee will meet as needed. Carl Baum noted that the Finance Subcommittee will discuss their 2026 calendar as an agenda item on their upcoming meeting on October 7, 2025.

Motion: To approve the 2026 Meeting Calendar for the 2026 committee and subcommittee meetings.

First: Kurt Metheny

Second: Jason Reynolds

Motion Carries: The motion passed unanimously.

b. Central Valley Pest Control District (PCD) Commercial Activities

Dr. Etienne Rabe presented the executive summary for the ongoing activities of the Central Valley PCD commercial activities. His objective is to devolve CDFA commercial Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) and huanglongbing (HLB) activities and have more grower involvement via the PCDs. In the Central Valley, the Alliance of Pest Control Districts (APCD) spends 95-percent of their effort on ACP/HLB in commercial citrus, with 79-percent of California commercial acreage under their

operation. Dr. Rabe stated that the APCD is a joint powers agreement comprising of four Central Valley PCDs (Central Valley, Kern County, Tulare County, and Southern Tulare County) and the Madera and West Fresno PCDs will be joining soon. APCD activities include grove trapping, grove multi-pest survey, diagnostics, ACP treatment, and grower engagement. CDFA also does many of these activities in commercial citrus, essentially duplicating efforts with the APCD. The APCD's current budget is \$2.7 million and is funded by property tax assessment on citrus acreage.

Dr. Rabe continued the presentation comparing APCD and CDFA costs for different activities but emphasized APCD costs presented are comprehensive while CDFA costs are partial. APCD's cost for trapping is \$1.8 million compared to CDFA's \$459,002. The total cost for multi-pest inspection for APCD is \$347,318 compared to \$405,995 for CDFA. CDFA's current budget allocation in the Central District is \$7.18 million and Dr. Rabe would like to see CDFA update its costs to include management and for CDFA to allocate at least the current spending on commercial trapping and multi pest surveys in the Central Valley to APCD, approximately \$1 million. If possible, the desert PCDs should also be funded accordingly.

Motion: To establish an Ad Hoc Committee to work between APCD and CDFA to facilitate augmentation of the program in commercial areas in the Central Valley, particularly in response to pest detections.

First: Ram Uckoo

Second: Jason Reynolds

Motion Carries: The motion passes unanimously.

7. FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

a. Review 2024/2025 Budget and Expenditures and Revenue

Carl Baum presented the report showing that from October 2024 to July 2025, assessments were received on approximately 175 million cartons, which is a 7.5-percent decrease relative to the same period last year where 182 million cartons were received. Currently, the Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Program is not projected to receive the same revenue as the previous crop year. If the Program were to receive the same number of cartons from August 2025 to November 2025 as the previous year, total revenue for the current crop year will fall short of the predicted \$18 million.

For Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-26, the approved budget is set at \$33 million, which includes \$4.5 million from General Fund, \$11.8 million from Federal Funds, and the remaining \$16.7 million from the Agricultural Fund. Carl added that the new federal agreement starts on October 1st but there is no estimated time for when the final federal funding award will be announced. At the time of posting the meeting agenda, the FY 2024-25 was not yet completed. It has since closed, and the FY 2024-25 final numbers will be shared at the upcoming Finance Subcommittee meeting on October 7, 2025 and Full Committee meeting on November 19, 2025. The Program

anticipates it will end FY 2024-25 with an estimated deficit of about \$1.5 million. A deficit would require the Program to pay to reconcile the deficit. Dr. Etienne Rabe questioned the approved budget of \$33 million and asked if the budget can be changed based on CPDPC's needs and changing the assessment rate. Carl confirmed the budget can be changed by the CPDPC.

Carl presented a table showing the total assessment collected from a range of estimated cartons at different assessment rates, and whether that situation would reach the approved Agricultural Fund of \$17.2 million. It was estimated that for CDFA to reach the approved budget at the current assessment rate of \$0.09, they would need to assess 191.3 million cartons.

Mark McBroom asked if there would be any carry-in from FY 2024-25. Carl stated that there would be no carry-in and that the Program expects to start July 1st with a deficit between \$1 to \$1.5 million. Mark stated that in previous years the Program had a reserve fund. Carl noted that if the fund had achieved a zero balance by July 1st, the Program would have been projected to have a surplus at the end of the current year, assuming the revenue target was met.

The members discussed the pros and cons of raising the assessment while being fiscally responsible for the Program. Some members argued that the assessment rate can remain the same due to cuts previously made to the Program and if the approved budget could instead be amended to a more conservative amount. While others discussed how raising the assessment rate would be beneficial towards the Program by helping to cover unexpected shortfalls and costs and allowing a reserve fund for the Program to be built.

Motion: To set the 2025-26 crop year assessment rate at nine and a half cents (\$0.095).

First: Kurt Metheny

Second: Roger Smith

Motion Carries: The motion passes passed with 10 yays (Kevin Ball, Franco Bernardi, Jay Gillette, Jim Gorden, Mark McBroom, Kurth Metheny, Rob Radtke, Jason Reynolds, Roger Smith, and Keith Watkins), 5 nays (Brad Carmen, John C. Gless, Jose Lima, Etienne Rabe, and Ram Uckoo), and one abstention (Aaron Dillion).

8. OPERATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

a. HLB Hot Spot Recommendation

David Phong presented a one-page report from the HLB Hotspot Working Group summarizing the group's recommendations. Hotspots are areas where HLB is highly prevalent, and allocating resources may no longer be worthwhile. Criteria for declaring a hotspot is: (1) the Section Township Range grid (STR) has an average HLB positivity rate of three- to five-percent over the last three years, (2) an area

cannot be declared a hotspot if less than ten HLB-positive trees are detected over a consecutive three-year period, and (3) any STR declared a hotspot will have a halo of three STRs also declared a hotspot. The agricultural and urban interface are areas within three miles of commercial citrus and also cannot be declared a hotspot. Commercial citrus in this recommendation is defined as a grove with five or more acres, or cluster of groves within one mile of each other that combine to be five or more acres.

Motion: To accept the HLB hotspot definition as defined by David Phong and the Hot Spot Working Group.

First: Kevin Ball

Second: Roger Smith

Motion Carries: The motion passed unanimously.

b. Regional Activity Recommendation

Kevin Ball noted that the Operations Subcommittee reviewed the Regional Working Group recommendations for which activities should occur in the different regions of California. David Phong summarized the working group's recommendation that activities should remain the same, but modifications should be made to the protocols for existing activities in specific regions. Modifications include targeted biocontrol releases in certain regions, optimizing detection trapping, deploying sentinel traps in the Southern Coast region, and shifting priorities to agricultural-urban interface areas in the Southern region. The Operations Subcommittee agreed with the recommendations made by the working group.

Motion: To accept the Regional Working Group recommendations from David Phong, recommending modifications to the protocols for existing activities for different regions as operational guidelines for CDFA staff.

First: Kevin Ball

Second: Jose Lima

Motion Carries: The motion passed unanimously.

c. Grower Liaison (GL) Program

The Operations Subcommittee recommended maintaining two GLs, one in the Central Valley and one in Southern California. There is \$240,000 allocated in the current budget for a GL program. The consensus of the Committee is to fund a GL in Southern California and have the GL in the Central Valley overseen by the PCD.

Motion: To hire one GL in the southern region.

First: Kevin Ball

Second: Ram Uckoo

Motion Carries: The motion passed unanimously.

d. Laboratory Update

Lucita Kumagai presented the CDFA Plant Pest Diagnostics Center HLB Testing Program data. In 2025, an average of 4,748 plant and 808 ACP samples were submitted per month, compared to 6,558 plant and 388 ACP samples in 2024. So far in 2025, only 42,478 samples have been submitted for HLB testing, which represents a 50-percent reduction compared to previous years. Decreased sampling can be attributed to shifting priorities and changes in sampling protocols. From 2012 to 2025, a total of 6,444 sites, 10,200 trees, and 917 ACP samples have tested positive for HLB. To date in 2025, 497 sites, 864 trees, and 49 ACP samples have tested positive for HLB. Out of the 864 positive tree samples, 774 were collected from HLB response survey and 90 were from risk-based survey. Out of the 49 positive ACP samples, 33 were collected from HLB response survey and 16 from risk-based survey. Lucita concluded that a recent study indicated that ACP on traps up to four weeks old can still be tested for *Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus*. Moving forward the lab will test all ACP on yellow sticky traps up to four weeks old.

e. Multi-Pest Survey (MPS)

David Phong presented the 2025 MPS cycle 1, which began in May 2025, is currently at 85-percent completion. Survey is completed in 18 of 31 allocated counties. To date, approximately 18,000 properties have been surveyed in this cycle, with 3,200 ACP and 4,600 plant samples collected. David and team are adding grids outside of the core survey area to help Dr. Clark at EcoData to help ground-truth his model. In the Southern District there are 21 staff members from six offices working on MPS with 83-percent of the 264 assigned grids complete. In the Central Valley there are 16 staff members from four offices actively working on MPS with 79-percent out of the 428 assigned grids complete. In the Northern District there are two staff members working on MPS, with 95-percent out of the 93 assigned grids complete.

f. CDFA Operational Update

Keith Okasaki presented the operational updates. In the Southern District, there were two new detections. In the San Clemente area of Orange County, a residential lime tree tested positive for HLB. The detection is outside the current quarantine boundary, and the nearest commercial grove is more than five miles from the detection area. Due to updated protocols, only the find site was surveyed. In the Murrieta area of Riverside County, a *Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus* positive (Clas+) adult ACP was detected at a residential site. Follow-up surveys have been negative. Overall, there has been a reduction in the number of HLB detections in the last two months due to updated protocols and responses. CDFA is continuing to remove positive trees from the refusal properties by executing warrants. Currently there are 290 trees pending for removal.

In the Central District, an adult ACP was found in a commercial grove in Monterey County in July 2025. Since the initial detection, the grove owner has decided not to

treat, but no additional ACP has been found. In the Woodlake area of Tulare County, three adult ACP were found at a packinghouse, with additional detections in late August 2025. Delimitation traps continue being serviced and CDFA staff conducted a 400-m treatment area on residential properties. CDFA have been in contact with the growers and APCD to coordinate treatment. Jennifer Willems confirmed that communications were made with all those affected in the treatment areas, except for three properties which were turned over to Dr. Subhas Hajeri for follow-up. Dr. Hajeri and Jessica Leslie confirmed contact has been made with two properties, with the third property being deemed too dangerous for direct contact, and treatments have been scheduled. *Tamarixia radiata* releases have been used in these new detection areas as well as Ventura County. In the Santa Paula area of Ventura County, four trees are pending removal. ACP detection trapping, grove trapping, and MPS are currently on-going in the Central District with commodity survey resuming in the fall.

In the Northern District, modified delimitation trapping and biocontrol releases are still ongoing in Santa Clara County. At the end of June 2025, sites with ACP find sites and adjacent properties were treated. Winter detection trapping will begin in October in 17 counties. Year-round trapping is ongoing in three counties.

g. CDFA Regulatory and County Update

Keith Okasaki reported that the focus has been on the August 2025 packinghouse ACP detection in the Tulare County. CDFA staff are working with the counties to ensure all the requirements were met properly, but no points of failure have been identified. Counties are placing a greater emphasis on packinghouse inspections to ensure shipments meet quarantine requirements and records are maintained. San Diego County took action on an unclear shipment by suspending a grate cleaning allowance and has also found issues with growers not notifying the county.

h. Biocontrol Update

Grace Radabaugh presented the biocontrol updates. To date in 2025, 1,301,700 biocontrol agents have been released, totaling 33.3 million releases since the start of the program. The lab is on track to produce over two million *Tamarixia* in 2025. Releases continue in HLB quarantine boundaries, US-Mexico border, trade routes, area-wide management, and new find sites, which include Monterey and Tulare Counties. Follow up surveys show a reduction in ACP population on flush. The lab is working with the Citrus Research Board (CRB) to increase the fitness of the insects out in the field. Specimen from coastal and desert regions, that have survived in California for several generations, are being collected to start colonies.

i. Outreach Report

Dahmoon Maesomy provided the outreach report. Per the Full Committee meeting on May 14, 2025, the Outreach Subcommittee has been dissolved, and outreach updates have been given during the Operations Subcommittee meetings. The Nuffer, Smith, Tucker (NST) contract expires on September 30th, 2025, and the new

contract is currently out for bid. In addition, a few proposals for the Pest Prevention Act 7721 funding were submitted for outreach and commodity survey activities, totaling \$1.1 million. A billboard and social media campaign was completed with Arizona, California, Florida, and Texas, and in collaboration with USDA. Price Adams reported NST launched a revamped homeowner's website.

9. SCIENCE SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

a. Ethyl Formate Registration Update

Dr. Etienne Rabe reported that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has approved the use of Ethyl Formate. EPA has been in communication with the Department of Pesticide Regulations (DPR) regarding risk assessment. DPR is working reviewing but has provided no estimated timeline for a decision. Casey Creamer commented that Ethyl Formate is a priority for multiple commodity groups, so there is a broader effort to help push it through DPR.

10. CALIFORNIA CITRUS MUTUAL (CCM) REPORT

Casey Creamer reported that CCM can provide CDFA with support distributing information. Dahmoon Maesomy assisted CCM with submitting a specialty block grant proposal, which could provide up to \$500,000 for tree removal.

11. CRB REPORT

Marcy Martin reported that the contract and memorandum of understanding with the CDFA to continue supporting CRB's efforts have been finalized. CRB has a mandate to perform and develop research tools to support the State's program. CRB has been working on a machine-based artificial intelligence model for several years and is currently in the stages of being validated. CRB aims to validate a model that can be economically feasible for future use.

12. OTHER ITEMS, CLOSING COMMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT

Franco Bernardi will be retiring from his position on the Committee. The meeting was adjourned at 1:08 p.m. The next meeting will be on November 19, 2025 at the Lindcove Research Extension Center in Tulare County.