CALIFORNIA CITRUS PEST AND DISEASE PREVENTION COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 16, 2026
Oxnard, California

Committee Members Present:

Kevin Ball
Brad Carmen
Aaron Dillon*
Jay Gillette*
Jim Gorden
Christopher Greer
Jose Lima*
Mark McBroom
Kurt Metheny
Dr. Etienne Rabe
Rod Radtke
Jason Reynolds*
Roger Smith
Jeff Steen
Dr. Ram Uckoo
Keith Watkins

Committee Member Absent:

John C. Gless

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Staff:

Deborah Ayala
Carl Baum*
Steven Donaldson*
David Gutierrez*
Anmol Joshi
Lucita Kumagai*
Dahmoon Maeesomy*
Alex Muniz*
Keith Okasaki
Nathan Rosenblum
Michael Soltero*
Ned Thimmayya*
ThuyVy Truong*
Claudia Vazquez
Nilan Watmore*
Jennifer Willems*
Jason Wu*

Guests:

Price Adams*
Hardie Bamboo*
Marjie Bartels
Dr. Robert Clark*
Tom Danowski
Natalie DeAngelo*
Lisa Finke*
Michael Frantz
Dr. Saurabh Gautam*
Dr. Subhas Hajeri*
Julia Inestroza
Andy Klittich
Louise Lampara
Meagan Lott*
Kurtis Lepper*
Jessica Leslie*
Marcy Martin*
Dr. Ivan Milosavljevic
Margaret O'Neill*
Curtis Pate
Cressida Silvers*
Stephanie Stark*
Jacob Villagomez
David Wirta
Helene Wright*
Judy Zaninovich*
Sandra Zwaal*

**Attended the meeting virtually.*

1. CALL TO ORDER, WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Roger Smith called the Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Committee (CPDPC) meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. Roger welcomed the Committee, staff, and members of the public participating in person and online.

2. ROLL CALL

With 16 committee members present, there was a quorum for the meeting.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Michael Frantz requested the CPDPC recommend extending the huanglongbing (HLB) retail nursery program, which is set to expire on November 30, 2026. The purpose of the program is to reduce the number of illicit backyard nurseries by providing an avenue for buyers to obtain clean citrus nursery stock (CNS). Michael argued that making clean CNS available to customers in the HLB quarantine area would fulfill market needs, reducing illicit backyard nurseries and is a much safer alternative than a homeowner purchasing a possibly infected tree.

Andy Klittich expressed his support for extending the HLB retail nursery program, stating it would reduce illicit backyard nurseries and the spread of possibly infected trees.

4. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

The consent agenda contained the following item:

a. Minutes from June 10, 2026 Committee Meeting

Motion: To approve the minutes on the Consent Agenda.
First: Kevin Ball
Second: Keith Watkins
Motion Carries: The motion passed unanimously.

5. EXECUTIVE SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

a. Action Items

i. Approve 2027 Committee Calendar

Motion: To approve the 2027 CPDPC meeting calendar.
First: Christopher Greer
Second: Rod Radtke
Motion Carries: The motion passed unanimously.

b. Industry Ad Hoc Committee Update

Roger Smith provided an update on the Industry Ad Hoc Committee, which was formed to discuss the future of the California citrus industry and Citrus Pest Disease Prevention Division (CPDPD). Initial interviews with members, conducted by Nuffer Smith Tucker, have concluded and they are working on scheduling the first meeting with the group. . Meetings will be open to the public.

c. Committee Vacancy – Northern District

Keith Okasaki informed the Committee that Rod Radtke will not be renewing his term so there will be a vacancy in the Fresno area for the Northern District. The vacancy will be posted soon and has a six-week application deadline.

6. FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

a. Review 2025/2026 Budget and Expenditures and Revenue

Claudia Vazquez reported that the July 2026 year-to-date (YTD) revenue total closed at $19,734,737, which equates to 207,734,081 cartons processed. During the report, Marcy Martin indicated that the CPDPD cartons received are slightly below the numbers received by the Citrus Research Board (CRB). CPDPD and CRB will compare their numbers in the future. In June 2026, $2,523,297 was expended bringing the YTD total to $28,078,634, which is 85-percent of the budget. Slides presented displayed a breakdown of expenditures by activity type, funding source, and district. Claudia updated the Committee that the CPDPD submitted a request for $20 million in federal funding for FY 2027 and the current federal agreement has been fully funded. Future reports will display the Data Analysis and Outreach budgets separately rather than being included in the Northern District budget. A request was submitted for an Emergency Fund (E-Fund) allotment to conduct HLB detection and eradication activities in Imperial County and pending review and approval by CDFA's E-Fund Committee at their October meeting. Currently, only the HLB response activities in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties are covered under an approved E-Fund project. The final slide showed the total encumbrances for FY 2025-26 with a breakdown by district and activity.

b. Action Item

i. Revenue Reserve Fund

At the Finance Subcommittee meeting on August 27, 2026, the Finance Subcommittee recommended establishing a reserve within the Agricultural Fund to fund three to six months of CPDPD activities in the event of a poor crop year. The reserve will be established by allocating $4,000,000 from FY

2025-26 and an additional $2,000,000 each year for the next two years, making a total reserve balance of $8,000,000.

Motion: To establish a reserve balance in the Agricultural Fund, beginning with $4 million in 2026 and adding an additional $2 million each in 2027 and 2028.
First: Mark McBroom
Second: Etienne Rabe
Motion Carries: The motion passed unanimously.

ii. Set 2026/27 Assessment Rate

Claudia presented a table to facilitate discussion regarding setting the assessment rate for the 2026-27 crop season. The table included a range of cartons processed and various assessment rates, with the goal of ensuring the 2026-27 assessment rate would fund the Agricultural Fund budget of $17.7 million previously approved at the June 10, 2026 CPDPC meeting. Members noted that for FY 2025-26, an estimate of 220 million cartons will be assessed, and all indicators seem to show that FY 2026-27 will be approximately the same according to CRB and grower projections, which the Committee opted to rely upon. Based on CRB's estimates, members felt lowering the assessment rate to eight and a half cents ($0.085) would be adequate to fund the approved budget. Other members argued that estimates may be incorrect and by setting assessments to $0.085, it may be difficult to hold funds to establish a reserve.

Motion: To set the 2026-27 crop season assessment rate at $0.085 per carton.
First: Keith Watkins
Second: Kurt Metheny
Motion Carries: The motion passed with 10 yays (Kevin Ball, Brad Carmen, Aaron Dillon, Jim Gorden, Jose Lima, Kurt Metheny, Etienne Rabe, Roger Smith, Ram Uckoo, and Keith Watkins), 5 nays (Jay Gillette, Christopher Greer, Rod Radtke, Jason Reynolds, and Jeff Steen) and 1 abstention (Mark McBroom).

7. OPERATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

a. Strategic Priority 1 – Find and Eradicate HLB

i. Laboratory Update

Lucita Kumagai presented the CDFA Plant Pest Diagnostics Center lab update. A total of 28,235 plant and 5,359 Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) samples have been submitted in 2026, equating to an average of 3,654 plant and 670 ACP samples per month. In 2026 to date, 419 trees and 44 ACP samples

have tested positive for HLB, bringing the total since 2012 to 10,813 trees and 972 ACP.

ii. Multi-Pest Survey (MPS)

Keith Okasaki presented the 2026 MPS cycle 1 data, which began in late April 2026 and is 29-percent complete. The grid selection process for this cycle included CRB's machine learning model. In the Southern District, 32 of the 247 assigned grids are complete; in the Central District, 124 of the 344 assigned grids are complete; and in the Northern District, 51 of the 125 assigned grids are complete.

iii. Action Item

1. Imperial County Survey Agreement Increase

Keith reported that following the detection of an HLB-positive tree in Imperial County, the Operations Subcommittee recommended at the August 27, 2026, meeting to increase funds for the Imperial County Agricultural Commissioner (CAC). Currently CPDPD has a $50,007 agreement with Imperial County for border MPS activities. The recommendation would increase the agreement amount to $250,000 and would be used to support increased border activities such as MPS, ACP detection, outreach, and possibly a biocontrol program.

Motion: To increase the Imperial CAC's 2026-27 MPS agreement to $250,000 and increase the CPDPD's overall budget accordingly to $34,997,718.
First: Rod Radtke
Second: Kurt Metheny
Motion Carries: The motion passed with 14 yays (Kevin Ball, Brad Carmen, Aaron Dillon, Jay Gillette, Jim Gorden, Jose Lima, Kurt Metheny, Etienne Rabe, Rod Radtke, Jason Reynolds, Roger Smith, Jeff Steen, Ram Uckoo, and Keith Watkins) and 2 abstentions (Christopher Greer and Mark McBroom).

iv. CDFA Operational Update

Keith presented the CPDPD Operational Updates. In the Southern District, Imperial County had its first HLB-positive tree detection at a residential property in the Calexico area. The tree was confirmed positive on August 6 and was treated and removed on August 11. Delimitation surveys are still ongoing, and no other trees have tested positive to date. Recently a *Candidatus* Liberibacter asiaticus-positive (*C*Las-positive) ACP was found in both Palmdale and Pacific Palisades. The trees from which the ACP were collected tested negative for HLB, and adjacent property surveys are ongoing.

HLB-positive trees continue to be detected in Rancho Mission Viejo. New HLB detections in the Fallbrook, Murrieta, and Valley Center triggered a significant expansion of the HLB quarantine area. Treatments were completed in Rancho Mission Viejo, Riverside, Loma Linda, Fallbrook, and Valley Center.
In the Southern District between June and August 2026, 119 trees tested positive for HLB, 123 HLB-positive trees have been removed, and 40 HLB-positive trees are pending removal.

In the Central District, a commercial grove in San Luis Obispo County near the Santa Barbara County border has had multiple ACP detections from the months of June to August. In response, the grower opted to apply multiple rounds of treatment and CDFA is treating the nearby residential area of Santa Maria in Santa Barbara County. On June 25, an ACP was found on an Alliance of Pest Control Districts (APCD) trap in the Orosi area of Tulare County. CDFA staff collected ACP adults and nymphs during a follow-up survey and all tested negative for *C*Las. Growers within 800 meters of the find site voluntarily treated their groves at APCD's request and there has not been a detection since July 9. In August, an ACP was detected on a CDFA residential trap in the Hollister area of San Benito County. Treatment, delimitation trapping, and biocontrol releases soon followed the detection, but ACP continues to be detected. Kern County has had ACP detections in multiple areas which include Arvin, Bakersfield, Taft, and a commercial citrus grove in Mettler. No additional detections have been found in these areas following CDFA response activities. In the Santa Paula area of Ventura County, 205 trees have tested positive for HLB, 179 HLB-positive trees have been removed, and three properties are currently refusing tree removal.

In the Northern District, citrus yellow vein clearing virus (CYVCV) was detected in the Lodi area of San Joaquin County. A quarantine area was established and delimitation surveys are ongoing. Committee members wanted to see if there was more updated literature on CYVCV and tasked the Science Subcommittee to find and discuss new CYVCV studies.

1. **Imperial County E-Fund Request**

   A request was submitted for the HLB E-fund to include Imperial County and is undergoing review. Currently, only Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties have HLB-response activities funded by E-Fund.

2. **Sweet Orange Scab (SOS) Delimitation**

   Keith reported that the SOS delimitation survey response will be updated to a maximum 250-meter radius from the detection site (previously 800-meters) and will be based on proximity to commercial citrus to mirror HLB delimitation response.

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

i. CDFA Regulatory and County Update

Keith provided a report on the regulatory activities conducted by the CACs. Fruit seller inspections have increased in comparison to the previous year, as fruit sellers represent a high-risk pathway of moving ACP. CDFA is working alongside Fresno and Kern County staff to assist with packinghouse inspections that have had recent ACP detections. The HLB quarantine area expansion in the Murrieta and Fallbrook area encompassed a large nursery and CDFA staff have discussed next steps with that nursery. There have been rising issues around citrus brokers, who are entities often without a compliance agreement and may be unaware of requirements, that purchase citrus fruit from small growers and sell the fruit directly to packinghouses or consumers in bulk bins. CDFA intends to provide educational outreach to packers and growers regarding brokers and unmitigated fruit movement.

ii. Action Item

1. HLB Retail Nursery Program

Keith provided an update on the HLB retail nursery program, which is set to expire on November 30, 2026. Currently, the sale of CNS is prohibited in the HLB quarantine unless sold from an approved structure. Prior to the program there was a rise in illicit backyard nurseries that were selling illegally propagated and possibly infected CNS, due to a lack of CNS availability in the market. To help combat this, in May 2025, the Committee voted to approve a limited-term program in Los Angeles and Orange Counties, which would allow for the sale of CNS in retail locations in the HLB quarantine area under a systems-based approach to mitigate the pest risk associated with the sale of these trees. The program requires that shipping nurseries utilize United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)-approved structures, treat CNS with program-approved systemic and foliar products, and that CNS is tagged with appropriate quarantine and program tags. Receiving retail nurseries must sign a compliance agreement with CDFA that stipulates a store cannot house more than 500 plants at a time, plants are housed in a solid-wall structure more than 30-ft away from doorways and must be destroyed once the treatment has expired. The Operations Subcommittee recommended that the program be extended for one year to better evaluate whether the program has been successful in reducing illicit backyard nurseries. Since the beginning of this program, a total of 108,174 plants has been shipped to 84 locations in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. CDFA staff inspect roughly 20-percent of the shipments with frequent issues including expired treatments and trees being placed outdoors. In total, 738 trees from the program have been

destroyed for non-compliance and retail stores that have continual issues will be removed from the program.

Members noted that the numbers show the market for CNS in these areas are robust and creating a void by not allowing CNS to be sold would lead to increased illicit backyard nurseries. Members reasoned that CNS will always find a way to the market, so allowing sales via a system-based approach is the safer option. Other members were alarmed by the total number of trees that have already been sold under the program and argued that introducing more CNS will increase HLB bacterium load, ACP population, and CDFA cost due to mandated removals for newly infected trees. Ideas were discussed on how to improve the program such as providing an educational tag/pamphlet alongside each tree to inform homeowners, providing the public with biological agents, utilizing local CAC staff to inspect, and low tolerance towards retail locations that are non-compliant.

Motion: To extend the HLB retail nursery program, which allows citrus nursery stock to be sold within the HLB quarantine under a systems approach, by one year to collect more data on the program's impact on illicit nurseries.
First: Jim Gorden
Second: Etienne Rabe
Motion Carries: The motion passed with 13 yays (Kevin Ball, Aaron Dillon, Jay Gillette, Jim Gorden, Jose Lima, Kurt Metheny, Etienne Rabe, Rod Radtke, Jason Reynolds, Roger Smith, Jeff Steen, Ram Uckoo, and Keith Watkins) and 3 nays (Brad Carmen, Christopher Greer, and Mark McBroom).

c. Strategic Priority 3 – ACP Control/Suppression

i. Biocontrol Report

Alex Muniz provided an overview of biocontrol activities. The YTD total of *Tamarixia radiata* (*T. radiata*) produced in 2026 is 1,540,050, which should allow the program to meet its annual average of two million agents produced. The YTD total *T. radiata* released through August 2026 is 1,538,200 (note: incorrect number was reported in slide deck and has been corrected following CPDPC seeking clarification). Committee members discussed whether there are measures that could be taken to reduce the cost of *T. radiata*, as well as exploring alternative biocontrol agents. Discussions will be continued further at the next Science Subcommittee meeting.

d. Strategic Priority 4 – Outreach and Collaboration

i. Outreach Report

Dahmoon Maeesomy provided the Outreach report. In response to recent pest and disease detections throughout California, the outreach team coordinated with stakeholders to implement an outreach plan and deliver key messaging to residents through multiple media outlets. CDFA continues to educate target audiences via digital outreach, paid media, events, and earned media. In 2026-27, the outreach team plans to conduct media training for select CPDPD staff to become spokespeople, identify opportunities on social media, and participate in homeowner outreach campaigns.

8. SCIENCE SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

a. Ethyl Formate Registration Update

Etienne Rabe reported that the patent for ethyl formate has been acquired by a different company. The new company is working with the Department of Pesticide Regulation on risk assessment issues, and the required fumigation time may be increased by one hour. Product registration appears to be a few months away, at minimum.

b. Discuss Organic Treatment Options

Etienne shared at the July 30, 2026, Science Subcommittee meeting, members were tasked with discussing organic pesticide options for growers for “spray and harvest” and in response to HLB detections. During the discussion, members noted the “spray and harvest” list was outdated and as a result, the ACP Treatment Working Group was formed. The working group identified priority products that will be evaluated under field trials.

9. USDA REPORT

Helene Wright informed the Committee that the USDA received a request to review the movement of citrus fruit with stems and leaves that have undergone packinghouse procedures. The risk assessment was completed last year and sent out for comments. USDA is currently reviewing the comments with no final decision yet. USDA is also working with CDFA to review the SOS diagnostic test to ensure its accuracy.

10. CALIFORNIA CITRUS MUTUAL (CCM) REPORT

Jacob Villagomez reported that the state legislature is out of session, the House has recessed until after the election, but the Farm Bill is currently being debated on by the Senate Agriculture Committee. The National Institute of Food and Agriculture has announced that the Emergency Citrus Disease Research and Extension Program is available and is assembling a review panel. Jacob encouraged CPDPC members and interested stakeholders to join.

11. CRB REPORT

Marcy Martin provided updates regarding recent CRB activities which include expanding diagnostic work by including taking in voluntary nursery samples, making available their machine learning tool to help with CPDPD MPS grid selection, assisting with optimizing the ACP biocontrol program along the US-Mexico border, and evaluating packinghouse SOS mitigations.

12. PEST CONTROL DISTRICT (PCD) UPDATES

Jay Gillette informed the Committee that APCD has been very active in the Orosi and Orange Cove areas due to the recent ACP detection.

13. OTHER ITEMS, CLOSING COMMENTS, AND ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:54 p.m. The next meeting will be on November 18, 2026, in Riverside County.