

CALIFORNIA CITRUS PEST AND DISEASE PREVENTION COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 10, 2026
Exeter, California

Committee Members Present:

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

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Staff:

Carl Baum*	Lucita Kumagai*	Claudia Vazquez
Dr. Ravneet Behla*	Dahmoon Maesomy	Fabian Velasco
Steven Donaldson*	Lauren Murphy	Nilan Watmore
Paul Figueroa*	Keith Okasaki	Jennifer Willems*
David Gutierrez*	Grace Radabaugh*	Jason Wu*
Anmol Joshi	Michael Soltero*	

Guests:

Price Adams*	Henk Griffin*	Margaret O'Neill*
Craig Armstrong*	Dr. Subhas Hajeri	Curtis Pate*
Justin Brown*	Julia Inestroza	Connor Shanahan*
Scott Carlisle*	Dr. Melinda Klein	Stephanie Stark*
Dr. Bodil Cass*	Zak Lafitte	Elaine Trevino*
Natalie DeAngelo*	Jessica Leslie*	Jacob Villagomez
Manuel Gaitan*	Marcy Martin	David Wirta*
Greg Galloway	Dr. Ivan Milosavljevic*	Judy Zaninovich
Dr. Dhiraj Gautam*	Mia Neunzig*	Sandra Zwaal*
Dr. Sandipa Gautam*		

**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 9:08 a.m. Keith welcomed the Committee, staff, and members of the public participating in person and online.

2. ROLL CALL

With all 17 committee members present, there was a quorum for the meeting.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

John C. Gless issued an apology for his statements at the previous CPDPC meeting during the California Citrus Mutual (CCM) report.

Mark McBroom stated that this will be his last term as a committee member. Mark reflected on the history of the Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Program (CPDPP) and the citrus industry, and how effective they have been at navigating the spread of Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) and huanglongbing (HLB) throughout the years. However, new discussions with inclusion from younger and older generations need to be had to not stagnate. Discussions need to include the citrus industry and all entities that help protect against ACP and HLB. Mark stated that ACP and HLB should be the primary focus of the CPDPP as they are the biggest threat to the citrus industry.

Zak Lafitte, President of Wonderful Citrus, provided a handout (in supporting materials) to the Committee and attendees prior to his comments. Zak stated that given the current situation with ACP/HLB, CPDPP needs to refocus their goals on long-term management, be cost effective with investments directed toward the highest priorities, and be transparent with fund allocations, priorities, and results. A commercial detection response framework also needs to be established before it is too late so growers have a concrete plan that is coordinated, efficient, and well-prepared. Zak argued the need for CPDPP to shift its governing framework to be more grower-led and outlined what a grower-led model may look like in his handout. The handout listed key points for success such as: 1) Produce an agile organization able to adjust the program to meet evolving pressures; 2) Deliver a long-term management program outlining operational plans for future phases; 3) Coordinate and integrate existing county and state efforts into operational plans; 4) Operate HLB activities cost-efficiently and under current CPDPP costs; 5) Expand grower participation in detection and prevention measures; 6) Maintain a science-based approach; 7) Prioritize industry-wide outcomes over local interests; 8) Retain state and federal grants and funding; 9) Deliver transparency from a costing standpoint; and 10) Retain its position as the authoritative policy-making body for HLB management in California. Zak understands that a grower-led model cannot be successful unless citrus growers throughout all of California's regions help contribute and provide feedback. He is hoping this will spark discussion amongst growers.

Dr. Etienne Rabe expressed his frustration with the CPDPD's lack of flexibility. Etienne argued that more power should be given to the growers to make decisions on what's best for the citrus industry and doubts whether CPDPD, as it is now, should continue. Mark McBroom countered that the industry has seen successes and since the program's inception, it was the Committee that expressed disinterest in continuing activities in Southern California. Mark encouraged the new members to be more engaged.

4. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

The consent agenda contained the following items:

a. Minutes from November 19, 2025 Committee Meeting

Motion: To approve the minutes on the Consent Agenda.

First: Mark McBroom

Second: John C. Gless

Motion Carries: The motion passed unanimously.

5. EXECUTIVE SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

a. Action Items

i. Service Certificate for Franco Bernardi

Committee members thanked Franco Bernardi, who will be stepping down after this meeting, for his service on the Committee. Franco will receive a certificate as a show of gratitude for his years of service.

ii. Committee Vacancy – Public Member

The Committee held an election to fill the public member vacancy, previously held by Franco Bernardi. The three candidates were Christopher Greer, Tulare County Assistant Agricultural Commissioner; Maggie O'Neill, San Bernardino County Farm Bureau; and Sam Botkins, California Citrus Growers Association.

Motion: To elect Christopher Greer to fill the public member vacancy on the CPDPC.

First: Mark McBroom

Second: Ram Uckoo

Motion Carries: The motion passed with 16 yays (Kevin Ball, Franco Bernardi, Brad Carmen, Aaron Dillon, Jay Gillete, John C. Gless, Jim Gorden, Jose Lima, Mark McBroom, Kurt Metheny, Rod Radtke, Jason Reynolds, Roger Smith, Jeff Steen, Ram Uckoo, and Keith Watkins) and one abstention (Etienne Rabe).

iii. Funding for Central Valley Grower Liaison (GL)

Motion: To fund \$80,000 to the Alliance of Pest Control Districts (APCD) for their GL program, assuming no Legal or contractual issues.

First: Etienne Rabe

Second: Jeff Steen

Motion Carries: The motion passed unanimously.

b. Pest Control Districts (PCD) and Central Valley Response Activities

Roger Smith discussed progress made during the Central Valley Ad Hoc Committee meetings. Roger stated that reevaluating California Agricultural Commissioner's (CAC) response and budget to divert work to APCD would not be possible. It was also discussed whether APCD traps and pest identification could be considered official. Per CDFA Legal review, designating APCD traps/identification as official by delegating regulatory authority can be viewed as displacing civil servants and thus unlikely to happen. A few Committee members expressed their displeasure with this review and may have discussions with Secretary Ross. Roger pointed out that growers want a level of anonymity and thus cautioned committee members about future discussions about this topic with CDFA leadership.

CDFA developed an interactive trapping application that shows the locations of APCD and CDFA commercial traps in the Central Valley that will help provide a visualization of where trapping efforts overlap. The app currently does not include glassy-winged sharpshooter traps as they have not been placed for the season and there is interest in including the Citrus Research Board's (CRB) CRAFT program traps, although those are located only in southern California. With the generally static CDFA trapping locations, APCD will be able to select their sites to avoid duplicative efforts. Roger recommended that with the trapping app development and increased visibility between APCD and CDFA activities, an agenda item for interagency communication and cooperation be added to the Operations Subcommittee meetings.

c. Update on Motions from November 19, 2025 Committee Meeting

In the previous CPDPC Meeting on November 19, 2025, the Committee passed a motion to require the Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Division (CPDPD) obtain approval from the Executive Subcommittee prior to backfilling any permanent staff vacancies. Claudia Vazquez updated the Committee that per the CDFA Legal Office, State civil service positions and those within the Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Division (CPDPD) cannot be conditioned upon approval from the Committee. As such, the motion was not approved by Secretary Ross. However, although the motion was not signed, CPDPD will continue to be budget

conscious when making hiring decisions while a hiring freeze continues to be in effect.

6. FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

a. Review 2025/2026 Budget and Expenditures and Revenue

Claudia presented the CPDPC revenue updates using figures presented from the previous Finance Subcommittee meeting on February 17, 2026. From crop year 2024-25, the revenue increased by \$326,851, bringing the fiscal year (FY) 2024-25 revenue received total to \$17,454,317 from 193,936,855 cartons. To date in FY 2025-26, the revenue received equates to \$3,822,962 from 40,241,705 cartons.

The breakdown of the budget and expenditure has been updated to provide a more comprehensive summary of what fund types are being used and for what activity. In December 2025, \$2,263,859 of the budget was expended, leaving \$19,507,898 remaining. The following slides showed a breakdown of December expenditures by funding source and activity type. \$567,635 out of the \$1,436,200 HLB Ventura E-Fund budget has been expended and the E-Fund is expected to expire on June 30, 2026. CPDPD will request another extension but cannot confirm if it will be granted. The final slide shows the total encumbrances for FY 2025-26 with a breakdown by district and activity.

b. Action Item

i. Amend Ag Fund Budget Authority

Claudia Vazquez discussed lowering the fund authority amount for the Agricultural Fund to save on pro rata costs. Currently, the fund authority amount is \$22 million which has a pro rata cost of \$605,287. By lowering the fund authority amount, the pro rata cost would be lowered. The Committee will have until the next Full Committee meeting in June to decide whether this action should be taken to save on costs. If approved, the change would not take effect until FY 2027-28 and can be reversed, but only if there is availability in the department's excess fund authority pool.

c. Update on Financial Coding System

Claudia Vazquez reported that the CPDPD updated its financial coding system beginning January 2025. The update will provide a more comprehensive and up-to-date internal tracking of expenses. Prior to the update, early expenses to the Federal Funds would have to be billed toward the Ag Fund until the CHRP agreement was approved, resulting in delayed year-to-date expenditures for funding sources used. With the update, expenses will be directly billed to funding sources when bills are paid, making future financial reports more accurate.

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. To date in 2026, a combined total of 5,879 plant and ACP samples were submitted with 111 trees, and seven ACP samples across 51 sites testing positive for HLB. From 2012 to current day, a total of 6,576 sites, 10,470 trees, and 935 ACP samples have tested positive for HLB. The final slide compares the HLB positivity rate for tree and ACP samples collected from risk-based and HLB delimitation surveys throughout the years. In general, the positivity rate has steadily increased for tree samples collected from multi-pest surveys. The increase is believed to be from collecting samples from significantly fewer properties due to the change in survey protocols that would produce more negative results.

ii. Multi-Pest Survey (MPS)

Keith Okasaki presented the 2025 MPS cycle 2 data, which began in November 2025. During this cycle 870 grids were assigned in 33 allocated counties and is 23-percent complete. Approximately 7,300 properties have been surveyed within this cycle, with 1,400 ACP and 2,100 plant samples collected. In the Southern District, 79 of the 284 assigned grids are complete, in the Central District, 60 of the 441 assigned grids are complete, and in the Northern District, 9 of the 144 assigned grids are complete. In the future, the Southern District map will include a hotspot layer to show activity in relation to designated hotspots, and CPDPD will incorporate CRB's machine learning tool to help select MPS grids.

iii. CDFA Operational Update

Keith Okasaki presented the CPDPD Operational Update. In the Southern District, HLB-positive trees were detected in the Loma Linda area of San Bernardino County, the Ramona area of San Diego County, and the San Juan Capistrano and Ladera Ranch areas of Orange County. These detections led to an HLB quarantine expansion in Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego Counties. These expansions encompassed 411 acres of commercial citrus in the Loma Linda area and resulted in the entirety of Orange County to now fall under the HLB quarantine. In the Southern District between January and February 2026, 103 trees tested positive for HLB, 134 HLB-positive trees have been removed, and 121 HLB-positive trees are pending removal.

In the Central District, there have been multiple ACP detections in Fresno, Kern, and Madera Counties from September through November 2025. Following these detections, *Tamarixia* was released and treatments were completed in February 2026. These counties have not had a detection since late 2025. MPS, residential trapping, and grove trapping are still ongoing. Citrus commodity survey, which began in October, will continue as weather permits through spring. In Santa Paula, Ventura County, there is a total of 126 HLB-positive trees with the latest detection being in December 2025. The final slide for the Central District shows the Ct range and average in Santa Paula. From 18 *Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus* positive (CLas+) ACP, the Ct range was 15.93 to 32.44 with an average of 25.74. From 126 HLB-positive trees, the Ct range was 17.17 to 38 with an average of 27.99.

In the Northern District, Santa Clara County had six new ACP detections since November 19, 2025. *Tamarixia* continues to be released and the delimitation trapping within the county was further modified to free up staff time to focus on surveys. Winter trapping and MPS activities are ongoing, with winter trapping ending in April.

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

i. CDFR Regulatory and County Update

No regulatory update.

c. Strategic Priority 3 – ACP Control/Suppression

i. Biocontrol Update

Grace Radabaugh provided the Biocontrol update. In January 2026, 189,000 *Tamarixia* have been released, bringing the total release to 34 million since the inception of the program. Releases continue to be focused on the HLB quarantine, along the US-Mexico border and trade routes, area-wide management, and around new find sites. In 2025, the breakdown of *Tamarixia* releases was 68-percent in HLB infested areas, three percent in new ACP find sites, and 29-percent for area-wide management, trade routes, and borders. The lab is working alongside CRB to breed *Tamarixia* with varieties more adapted to coastal and desert environments in hopes of making more adapted biocontrol agents. The lab continues to see ACP population decrease overall though their region-wide urban monitoring program, although 2025 showed a slight increase. The Committee discussed effectiveness of current biocontrol release protocols and directed for discussions to be made during the next Operations Subcommittee meeting.

d. Strategic Priority 4 – Outreach and Collaboration

i. Outreach Report

Dahmoon Maesomy provided the Outreach report. Following the Imperial County CLas+ ACP detection, CPDPD responded by developing key messaging to align all stakeholders, used Citrus Insider to distribute information online, and worked with the Imperial County Ag Commissioner's office to support outreach. Social media continues to be an effective tool for outreach with key messaging including ACP/HLB information and CPDPD activity awareness. Alongside social media, CPDPD had a presence in various in-person events to connect with target audiences. Priority outreach strategies for 2026 include informing residents and stakeholders on key topics, collaborating with citrus industry communicators, developing statewide integrated awareness campaigns for target areas, and connecting with key regions and individuals. Dahmoon showed a breakdown of expenditures for outreach agreements and budgets. Overall, \$342,670 of the \$1,418,939 total outreach budget has been expended.

8. SCIENCE SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

a. Ethyl Formate Registration Update

Dr. Etienne Rabe reported that the California Department of Pesticide Regulation requires further study on risk management and worker safety from ethyl formate use. In addition, the label will need to be updated, and will require resubmission to the United States Environmental Protection Agency. It is now projected that it may take more than a year for ethyl formate to be registered in California.

b. Science Subcommittee Report

Dr. Etienne Rabe reported on studies discussed in the Science and Technology Subcommittee meeting on March 3, 2026 which included studies on different ACP predators and their effectiveness at controlling ACP, Argentine ant population control and its impact on ACP population, effectiveness of ACP management in HLB quarantine zones in Southern California residential areas, and the use of a sterile insect technique on ACP.

9. Officer Elections

Motion: To elect Keith Watkins as the Chairman of the CPDPC.

First: Jeff Steen

Second: Jim Gorden

Motion Carries: The motion did not pass with 11 nays (Kevin Ball, Franco Bernardi, Brad Carmen, John C. Gless, Jose Lima, Mark McBroom, Kurt Metheny, Etienne

Rabe, Jason Reynolds, Ram Uckoo, and Keith Watkins) and six yays (Aaron Dillon, Jay Gillette, Jim Gorden, Rod Radke, Roger Smith, and Jeff Steen).

Motion: To elect John C. Gless as the Chairman of the CPDPC.

First: Franco Bernardi

Second: Jose Lima

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

Motion: To elect Kevin Ball as the Vice Chairman of the CPDPC.

First: Mark McBroom

Second: Kurt Metheny

Motion Carries: The motion did not pass with 12 nays (Franco Bernardi, Brad Carmen, Aaron Dillon, Jay Gillette, Jim Gorden, Jose Lima, Etienne Rabe, Rod Radke, Jason Reynolds, Jeff Steen, Ram Uckoo, and Keith Watkins), four yays (John C. Gless, Mark McBroom, Kurt Metheny, and Roger Smith), and one abstention (Kevin Ball)

Motion: To elect Jeff Steen as the Vice Chairman of the CPDPC.

First: Keith Watkins

Second: Etienne Rabe

Motion Carries: The motion did not pass with 13 nays (Franco Bernardi, Brad Carmen, Aaron Dillon, Jay Gillette, John C. Gless, Jim Gorden, Jose Lima, Mark McBroom, Kurt Metheny, Rod Radke, Jason Reynolds, Roger Smith, and Jeff Steen), three yays (Etienne Rabe, Ram Uckoo, and Keith Watkins), and one abstention (Kevin Ball).

Motion: To elect Roger Smith as the Vice Chairman of the CPDPC.

First: Jim Gorden

Second: Jason Reynolds

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

Motion: To elect Kevin Ball as the Secretary/Treasurer of the CPDPC.

First: Roger Smith

Second: Jose Lima

Motion Carries: The motion did not pass with 10 nays (Kevin Ball, Aaron Dillon, Jay Gillette, John C. Gless, Jim Gorden, Mark McBroom, Rod Radtke, Jason Reynolds, Jeff Steen, and Keith Watkins) and seven yays (Franco Bernardi, Brad Carmen, Jose Lima, Kurt Metheny, Etienne Rabe, Roger Smith, and Ram Uckoo).

Motion: To elect Kurt Metheny as the Secretary Treasurer of the CPDPC.

First: Keith Watkins

Second: Jay Gillette

Motion Carries: The motion passed with 10 yays (Kevin Ball, Aaron Dillon, Jay Gillette, John C. Gless, Jim Gorden, Mark McBroom, Rod Radtke, Jason Reynolds, Jeff Steen, and Keith Watkins) and seven nays (Franco Bernardi, Brad Carmen, Jose Lima, Kurt Metheny, Etienne Rabe, Roger Smith, and Ram Uckoo).

10. UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA) REPORT

No USDA report.

11. CCM REPORT

Jacob Villagomez reported that the citrus commission bill has been repurposed and will not be moving forward. CCM has also provided comments on the recent Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service notice regarding importing Persian limes from Hawaii into the continental U.S. Future CCM activities include hosting their showcase event in Visalia and traveling to the US Capitol to advocate for citrus growers.

12. CRB REPORT

Marcy Martin provided updates regarding recent CRB activities which include integrating their machine learning tool to help with CPDPD MPS grid selection, *Tamarixia* field cage trials, and ant control research to help lower ACP populations. CRB will be updating the Committee more frequently on current projects and will be hosting their conference in the fall.

13. PCD UPDATES

Manuel Gaitan updated the Committee with an overview of the Riverside County Citrus PCD #2 and its recent activities. The PCD consists of 8,800 acres of citrus and the focus is on ACP treatment and monitoring, California Red Scale (CRS) eradication, controlling pest populations through integrated pest management, and regulatory coordination. The PCD performed an area-wide treatment for ACP with a participation rate of 95-percent, released over 200,000 Green Lacewing, and provide area-wide trapping that is used to coordinate treatments. For CRS, the PCD trapped during the recent summer and are scheduled to treat in the spring.

Dr. Subhas Hajeri updated the Committee with recent APCD activities which included ACP trapping, screening, and testing ACP and plant tissue samples. The APCD deployed traps in 2,241 off-season sites and 63 year-round sites. Year-round trap locations include weight-stations, truck stops, and transportation corridors. From December 2025 to February 2026, a total of 3,807 traps has been serviced and the APCD lab screened 1,470 traps and tested 930 samples to date in 2026.

14. OTHER ITEMS, CLOSING COMMENTS, AND ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:12 p.m. The next meeting will be on June 10, 2026, in Los Angeles County.