

California Department of Food and Agriculture  
Fertilizer Research and Education Program (FREP)  
Technical Advisory Subcommittee (TASC)

California Farm Bureau Federation Offices  
2300 River Plaza Drive  
CAPCA Board Room  
Sacramento, CA 95833  
June 12, 2012

**Minutes**

**TASC MEMBERS**

Jack Wackerman, Chair  
Tom Gerecke, Vice-Chair  
Eric H. Ellison  
Robert Fry  
Tom Gerecke  
Holly Little  
David P. McEuen  
Robert Mikkelsen  
Jerome Pier  
Chris Simas  
Doug West

**CDFA STAFF**

Asif Maan  
Erika Lewis  
Edward J. Hard

**SPECIAL GUEST**

Daniel Geisseler  
Dennis Chessman

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. Mr. Jack Wackerman, Chairperson, welcomed the subcommittee. Self-introductions were made and a quorum was established. Dr. Dennis Chessman introduced himself as the new representative for the Natural Resources Conservation Service California, as the State Agronomist. Dr. Chessman will assume the duties of Mr. Bob Fry who is retiring this year.

**REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES**

**MOTION:** Mr. Wackerman requested the committee to review the minutes of the February 23, 2012 meeting in Sacramento. David McEuen moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Bob Fry seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**REVIEW OF 2012 FULL PROJECT PROPOSALS**

Mr. Wackerman led discussion in reviewing the 2012 full project proposals. FREP received 10 full project proposals. Discussion ensued by TASC on each project proposal. The following eight proposals were recommend for approval for funding:

1. *Improving Pomegranate Fertigation and Nitrogen Use Efficiency with Drip Irrigation Systems*
  - a. Project Leader: James Ayars and Claude Phene
2. *Fertigation Education for the San Joaquin Valley*
  - a. Project Leader: William Green and Kaomine Vang
3. *Evaluation of a 24 Hour Soil CO<sub>2</sub> Test for Estimating Potential N-Mineralization to Reassess Fertilizer N Recommendations*
  - a. Project Leader: William Horwath, Martin Burger, and Jeffrey Mitchell
4. *Improving Nitrogen Fertilizer Management in California*
  - a. Project Leader: Renee Pinel and Rob Mikkelsen
5. *Developing Fertilizer Best Management Guides from FREP Research*
  - a. Project Leader: Renee Pinel and Rob Mikkelsen
6. *Characterizing N Fertilizer Requirements of Crops Following Alfalfa*
  - a. Project Leader: Dan Putnam, UC Davis
7. *Development of Economically Variable Rate P Application Protocols for Desert Vegetable Production Systems*
  - a. Project Leader: Charles Sanchez, Pedro Andrade, and Kurt Nolte
8. *Evaluation of N Uptake and Fertilization Strategies of High Density Plantings of Leafy Green Vegetables*
  - a. Project Leader: Richard Smith and Michael Cahn

### **REVIEW APPLICATIONS FOR TASC VACANCIES**

Dr. Asif Maan discussed vacancies on the TASC. A couple members' terms will be expiring and there is one additional vacancy. In addition to current members, seven individuals have applied to serve on the TASC. The TASC Chair facilitated the discussion. The TASC recommended the appointment of Dr. Dennis Chessman and Dr. Marja Koivunen; recommendations will be presented at the June 28<sup>th</sup> Fertilizer Inspection Advisory Board meeting.

### **PROGRAM UPDATES**

Mr. Edward Hard reviewed the FREP project accounting table that showed ongoing projects approved by CDFA. Discussion ensued to address project status and TASC steward assignments. Assignments were made. Dr. Holly Little and other TASC members expressed concern as to how the project steward process operated. Dr. Maan suggested that the FREP staff will clarify the process at the next TASC meeting.

Dr. Robert Mikkelsen identified a concern about the quality of the final reports received for the FREP program. Several members agreed and will form a small subcommittee to identify ways to improve the existing final project requirements. Members of the subcommittee include Dr. Eric Ellison, Dr. Jerome Pier, Mr. Tom Gerecke, Dr. Little and Mr. Hard. The final project reporting requirements will be emailed to the group for review and suggestions for improvement.

Dr. Maan opened the discussion on the Department initiatives related to water quality and nitrogen management. Dr. Daniel Geissler working with UC Davis on a cooperative agreement with FREP has established a database query tool. This tool as it was explained will increase the visibility of the final reports as well as tools and techniques that the FREP has produced over the history of the program. Dr. Geissler made a presentation on the web-based data query tool.

Dr. Maan went on to describe the second initiative for FREP, which is implementing nitrogen management plan (NMP) training and certification program for California certified crop advisors (CCAs). The curriculum and the method of education and training would likely be development of a module(s) with the expectation that the university will play a strong role in their creation. The certificate will focus on nitrogen management plan and will complement the existing CCAs certification program. Continuous education units (CEU) would be required to maintain the nitrogen management certification. Discussion ensued with concern over potential additional hours to the existing 40 hours of CEUs. The funding for the certification initiative was discussed; it is too early to determine how much funds will be needed to implement this NMP certification program. More details will be provided to TASC as the Department works cooperatively with the CA CCA program.

Mr. Hard described a third initiative for the FREP, which is applying for a USDA Conservation Innovation Grant to address innovative nutrient management techniques. The proposal to USDA is targeting the Central Coast Region and proven FREP tools and practices from FREP funded projects to apply at the field scale. The proposal is for \$500,000, with matching \$250,000 in cash and \$250,000 in-kind from FREP. The expected funding award announcement date is July 20<sup>th</sup>. FREP will keep the TASC informed of the outcome of the proposal award.

### **RESEARCH PRIORITY SUBCOMITTEE**

Mr. Hard reported that a TASC subcommittee met on April 25<sup>th</sup> in Modesto. The purpose and the objective of the subcommittee was, in part, to review research priorities, identify the content of a special Request for Proposal (RFP) and timeline for implementation. The subcommittee consists of Chair Mr. Tom Gerecke and members Dr. Jerome Pier, Dr. Michael Cahn, and Dr. Mikkelsen. A draft RFP proof-of-concept for "pump and fertilize" best management practices was presented by Dr. Mikkelsen, and discussion ensued among TASC members. Specific suggestions were made for improvement including increasing annual funding amounts from \$50,000 to \$75,000 for

the RFP and some clarifying language changes. FREP staff will make the recommended changes and circulate to the TASC for final review prior to presenting at the next Fertilizer Inspection Advisory Board (FIAB).

The TASC reviewed the existing research priorities for 2012 and collectively agreed after some discussion that the draft presented to the TASC by FREP staff should stand as presented.

The TASC will recommend to the FIAB to increase the annual funding amounts from \$50,000 to \$75,000 for the RFP and the annual grant solicitation. FREP staff will present the recommendation at the June meeting.

### **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held in San Diego during the second week of September.

**MOTION:** Dr. Jerome Pier moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Tom Gerecke seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

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Erika Lewis, Research Analyst  
Division of Inspection Services

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Date