

November 13, 2025
9:30am – 12:00pm

Panel Members in Attendance

Brianna Saint Pierre, CalEPA, State Water Resources Control Board
Leonard Diggs, Pie Ranch
Dr. Jeff Dlott, PhD, LandScan (Chair)
Erik Porse, PhD, California Institute for Water Resources, Non-Voting Member
Don Cameron, Terranova Ranch
Judith Redmond, Full Belly Farm
Shanna Atherton, California Department of Conservation, Member
Jonathan Wachter, California Natural Resources Agency, Member

Not in Attendance

Jon Gustafson, Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA, Non-Voting Member

9:30am Roll Call and Approval of Meeting Minutes from August 2025

- Jeff Dlott Decisional
 - o No public comment. Minutes moved by Member Cameron and seconded by Member Redmond. Motion passed unanimously

9:40am Review of AB 947 and changes to EFASAP

- Dr. Tawny Mata Informational
 - o AB 947 goes into effect January 1, 2026
 - o Director Mata explained the amendments made to the panel including updates to language, renaming the panel to 'Scientific Advisory Panel on Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture' (SAPRSA), clarifies the scope of CDFA's programming, expansion of the panel, term limits and updates tasks for members.
 - o Amendments were also made to the CSATA program including accommodations for Block Grantees, broadens the definition of allowable TA expenses and simplifies language about funding limits per TA provider.
- Panel Questions and Comments:

- Member Diggs asking about ‘community’ and what that means in context to the panel
 - Director Tawny responds that they will have to be clear about who we are talking about in regard to our projects and the scope. Need to thoughtfully define what ‘community’ means and its impacts.
 - Chair Dlott asks about term limits and how to avoid having all new members at the same time. Will this be addressed in coming meetings? Chair Dlott follows up asking about 2 additional members, 7 appointed by Secretary, 2 CalEPA and 2 Resource agency. Are we adding 4 members?
 - Director Mata answers by stating she will look at member history and come to a future meeting with term limit information. We don’t want to wipe the slate completely clean and clarifies that we are adding only 2 members.
- Public Comment:
 - Jamie Whiteford: Question to Director Mata about slide presentation about expansion of TA allowable expenses and how CDFA will confirm applicability or proposed activity?
 - Director Mata responds by referencing Block Grants and explaining CDFA will have to justify TA expenses in the budget and how they will contribute to overall project goals.
 - Jamie is asking for clarification on if the proposed activities were in support of local or state programs with a similar mission, do those adequately count as justification? (ex: activities to fight pollution).
 - Director Mata: Will look at TA requests. Must have some context with CDFA OARS mission and goals.

10:00am Climate Bond Funding Updates

- Dr. Tawny Mata Informational
 - CDFA received funding for HSP, SWEEP and an equipment sharing program. Did not come with APA exemptions or regulations in FAC. Everything that is a requirement in the grant program must go into regulations. As the lead agency on the bond, CNRA is working to provide guidance and training, but this is taking time. CDFA has limited staff and capacity in writing regulations.

- There is a possibility CDFA won't have to go through APA process but still working through this at this time.
- Request for Grant Applications for programs are ready, however CDFA must also have the Grant Awards Procedures (GAP) must also be ready to go at the same time. Anticipate early 2026 release of both documents for comment.
- Panel Questions/Comments:
 - Chair Dlott comments on simplification and streamlining of the programs and this may be a setback. Anticipate being patient and understand that bond money comes with certain requirements.
 - Director Mata responds that we will be putting items out for public comment and will be bringing them to the panel for input.
- Public Comment:
 - Do you have an estimated timeline expectation for when the finalized RFA / GAP documents will be released?
 - Director Mata responds that we don't want to speculate but hoping to have these grants fully executed so grantees have 9-12 months to put projects on the ground by Fall 2027. Don't have an answer about final documents.
 - Director Mata clarifies that internal process with OGA needs a few months typically to finalize grants and will be taken into entire timeframe.
 - Can the new short term federal farm bill extension affect this by not having a longer-term federal agreement in place?
 - Director Mata responds that there is no federal funding involved in these programs. The farm bill does not affect the timeline at all. Bond funding, once appropriated, can only be for that program.
 - Do you expect the award min and max to be similar to past funding years?
 - Carolyn Cook responds that we are proposing similar minimums and maximums, although Block grants may reduce from \$5M to \$4M but will go out for public comment.
 - Is there an end date by which all bond funds must be spent?
 - Director Mata clarifies that there are liquidation deadlines but they can often be extended for these funding types.
 - Is there a preference for applicants to collaborate with other applicants to submit 1 application?

- Carolyn Cook responds that this isn't a preference but is encouraged because we want to see impactful projects and partnerships.
- Director Mata clarifies that this will also be open to public comment.

10:30am SWEEP and HSP Block Grant Pilot Program Trends

- Dr. Michael Wolff and Scott Weeks Informational
- Scott Weeks – SWEEP 2023 BGP and 2021 Solicitation Data Analysis:
 - 2023 Block grant awarded 253 projects through 9 block Grant Organizations with ~40% of funds going to SDFR projects and an average project cost of \$140,721. 2021 solicitation awarded 283 projects with ~25% of funds going to SDFR projects with an average project cost of \$150,639.
 - 2023 Block Grant Water Savings: total project acreage was 25,109 with a water savings of 14,185 (Acre-feet), and a total pump GHG savings of 9,134 (MTCO₂e/year). 2021 Solicitation acreage was 34,597 with a water savings of 29,602 (Acre-feet), and a total pump GHG savings of 13,304 (MTCO₂e/year).
 - 2023 Block Grant consisted of smaller farmers with 0-50 acres (47%), and 2021 Solicitation consisted mainly of small farmers (0-50 acres at 27%) and medium farms (101-500 acres at 34%). Total project size for both the 2021 and 2023 solicitations were 0-50 acres.
 - Average cost of 2021 and 2023 projects were \$150k-\$200k/project.
 - The 2023 Block Grant was the first round that nitrous oxide (N₂O) emissions reductions have been estimated, using the new SWEEP tool.
 - Future funding notes: geographic coverage should be considered when awarding BGRs. OARS anticipates that due to regional resource challenges, programs will have compelling statements of need.
- Panel Questions/Comments:
 - Member Cameron commented that there was no agency south of Stockton handling grants, why was this?
 - Scott responded that they had very competitive solicitation, about 400% oversubscribed. The scoring criteria, and review process, SWEEP was just selecting projects that scored the highest.
 - Member Cameron commented that team should look at statewide distribution.

- Director Mata responds that areas that have really strong TAP and non-profits were also very competitive and were a reflection of the organization's readiness.
 - Carolyn Cook provided context and a reminder that this is an unfortunate part of the pilot program is not great distribution. Money was retracted for the direct to farmer grants and did not think it would be the end of funding opportunities.
- Member St. Pierre clarified and confirmed that folks in other parts of the state weren't ineligible, it was the scoring criteria.
- Member Atherton expresses concern around distribution of grants around the state. Supports idea of funding for direct to producer grants or asking if they have considered a statewide grant to reach certain regions, and acknowledging funding is limited but geographic distribution is an issue, does the block grant need to be competitive? Primary goals of program is getting funds to small producers but perhaps at the expense of water savings – how do staff feel about those trade-offs and do we feel block grant model has been successful?
 - Scott Weeks responds that they have run competitive grant and this helps get the most prepared organizations. Interested in having more statewide distribution across Central Valley and higher SDFR populations and over drafted groundwater basins. In regard to reduction of GHG and water savings and how staff feel, staff is excited to support small farmers and farmers with smaller land holdings. Fundamental truth about is you have smaller parcel it may be more expensive to achieve water savings. It is a balancing of many of CDFA's priorities.
 - Director Mata adds that we think about supporting growers of all sizes. Speaking on direct solicitations, do not anticipate running direct solicitations unless there is more reliability in funding. Don't think that is a sustainable model. Block grantees may also have gotten more accurate estimates of savings due to more hands-on assistance.
- Member Wachter reiterates the readiness of TA organizations and how important this is. Direct to farmer solicitation is dependent on an individual farmer's readiness to submit an application while the block grant is dependent on block grant organizations. What could help TA organizations to prepare more for this solicitation?

- Scott responds that there is staff turnover. The next funding cycle should be clearer about our expectations and help them understand what it means to be a competitive grant and how to add clarity.
- Director Mata adds that it would help for them to partner with a prepared organization for mentorship. Would be pleased to see strong TA organizations build capacity for lower resource organizations to apply as main grantee in next rounds.

Partnerships are a great way to build capacity and expand.

- Member Porse suggests thinking through some of the assumptions and following up on grantees to ask about continued gains. To Member St. Pierre's point, is this helping improve productivity or resulting in water use reductions and these may be different in different parts of the state. Best time to think about program metrics is before the program starts.
- Member Diggs speaking to non-profit component and thinking about limitations and pressure to develop capacity and fundraising. All of those put pressure on this group to do important work. This is a big ask to put on non-profits to do this type of work versus for a for-profit.
- Member Wachter asks about the GHG beta calculator for nitrous oxide – is this on the SWEEP website?
 - Scott put the link in the chat and comments it should be on the website.

- Public Comments

- It has been mentioned that critical need will be a factor in choosing BGRs in the next solicitation -- do you anticipate this will result in more BGRs being chosen in the Central Valley where groundwater pumping is a major concern?
 - Director Mata clarifies that the programs will ask for and assess need and need to portfolio balance outside of scoring and look at other, balancing factors
- Is there a way to see what types of grants were funded? Is there any consideration of diversity for crops or solutions outside of geography?
 - Director Mata responded that every block grantee had their own selection system and will be asking more questions about this in upcoming solicitations.
- Really appreciate Shanna's comments regarding distribution, route of funding distribution, and suggestion regarding splitting funding between

BGR format and direct to grower format. The stats show more savings per invested dollar in the direct to grower model.

- Regarding SDFR's, (and all applicants,) will there ever be consideration on the producer's wealth when selecting small producers?
 - Director Mata: This would require collecting a lot of sensitive information that we are not prepared to collect. CDFA is talking about how to define a small farm.
- When will the next funding cycle occur?
 - Director Mata responds that we are unsure but hope to have documents released for public comment in early 2026.
- Do you see Farm Bureau's as good BG recipients and facilitators of the funding to their local farmers?
 - Director Mata responds that Farm Bureaus have been great partners but bond language may prevent them from being eligible.
- Michael Wolff – HSP 2023 Block Grant and 2021/22 Solicitation Data Analysis
 - 2023 Block grant projects awarded 640 on-farm projects including 251 SDFR projects and an average project cost of \$77,653. 2021 Solicitation awarded 940 projects including 288 SDFR projects with an average project cost of \$70,544.
 - Most project farm sizes were 0-50 acres and 101-500 acres. Large jump of smaller (0-50 acres) in the 2023 Block Grant.
 - Compost has been the most popular practice (mainly purchased) but did receive slightly less in the Block Grants. (2023 compost projects were 75.5%, 2021 compost projects totaled 87.9%) with cover cropping doubling, more range planting projects, more mulching projects.
 - 2023 total acreage awarded was 47,853 with a total GHG mitigation of 421,383 MTCO₂e. 2021 total acreage was 82,433 acres.
 - 2023 cropland system projects have decreased since 2021, however orchard and vineyard and rangeland projects have held steady.
 - Future Funding Notes include that a per-practice cap will be implemented, geographical distribution must be addressed over multiple funding rounds and croplands are falling behind in HSP support meanwhile rangeland planting increase almost 4x as a percentage of support., and compost continues to consume a very high fraction of HSP funding despite the simultaneous support from SB 1383 programs and associated legislature.
- Panel Questions/Comments:

- Member Cameron confirms that this will be posted online and sent to the members.
- Member Diggs suggests assembling a sub-committee, particularly around vegetable crops and how easy it will be to deploy these practices and to get a better sense of the other cultural practices out there.
- Member Cameron follows up by saying that the reason annual cropland acres are falling behind may be related to food safety issues and agrees with Leonard and there may be some apprehension about working with what is available.
- Member Wachter asks if we have a sense of block Grant recipients and in their solicitations to farmers, did they apply additional ranking criteria that would have influenced a higher diversity of practices?
 - Michael Wolff responds that this is hard to generalize and that many block grants took different approaches and that there were targets of reaching 25% SDFR's and they generally surpassed that.
- Public Comment:
 - Is there any discernable relationship between SWEEP/HSP grants and usage of USDA-NRCS programs? e.g. are CDFA programs a "gateway" to NRCS program participation? Or vice-versa? Any synergy in terms of TA capacity?
 - Director Mata responds that these programs are often able to complement each other.
 - Michael Wolff notes that the structure of awards prohibits funds to the same practice for the same acres and maybe other programs can be repeated on same acres.
 - Scott Weeks adds that we do use NRCS CPS standards for SWEEP which have been listed in the RGA as resources. SWEEP Program has looked at it as more of a comprehensive overhaul. Do not allow the same hardware to be funded through multiple grants.
 - Jamie Whiteford reiterates with respect to SWEEP that there may be a lack of representation in certain regions due to the lack of funding. Appreciation for Director Mata's comment about leaning on Block grant models in the future to avoid whiplash, but we need to go through more funding cycles to figure things out. Organizations, once they know this is the approach, they will expand to areas that aren't served. Building local TA capacity can't exist if we keep going back and forth between funding models.

- Chair Dlott applauds the data that was shared and thanks the CDFA team for sharing. Encourages tool sharing, resource sharing across agencies and private partnerships to make the funds reach farther.
 - Next meeting is February 12 and will be an in-person, longer meeting.
- General public comment:
 - No general public comment

12:00pm Adjourn

- Motion to adjourn the meeting by Member Diggs, Seconded by Member Cameron. Meeting adjourned at 11:43