

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (CDFA)  
ENVIRONMENTAL FARMING ACT SCIENCE ADVISORY PANEL**

**USDA NRCS  
Room 125, 430 G Street  
Davis, CA 95616**

**January 31, 2014**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Panel Members**

Don Cameron, Member and Chair  
Mark Nechodom, PhD, Member  
Mike Tollstrup, Member  
Jocelyn Gretz, MSc, Member

**Subject Matter Experts**

Luana Kiger, MSc, Subject Matter Expert

**CDFA Staff**

Amrith Gunasekara, PhD

**AGENDA ITEM 1 - INTRODUCTIONS**

The meeting was called to order at 1:15 p.m. by Don Cameron. Mr. Cameron was selected chair by the Secretary following a leave of absence from the committee of the previous chair, Dr. Jeff Dlott. Introductions were made and a quorum was established. A request was made by Dr. Nechodom to include chair selection procedure language into the bylaws. The bylaw language will be reviewed by the Science Panel and approved at a subsequent meeting.

**AGENDA ITEM 2 - UPDATES**

Dr. Gunasekara presented the Science Panel bi-annual report to the members for consideration and public comment. The bi-annual report describes and summarizes work completed by the Science Panel since its formation in August, 2011 by the Secretary. A motion was made by Mr. Tollstrup and seconded by Ms. Gretz to approve the bi-annual report without further edits given the lack of public comment or changes. The bi-annual report will be posted on the Science Panel website with copies sent to Secretary of CDFA and the USDA Rural Development Office. Updates were provided on the Ecosystem Services Database and the Regulatory form/permit project as well.

**AGENDA ITEM 3 – CALIFORNIA ECONOMIC SUMMIT**

Dr. Glenda Humiston, State Director, from the USDA Rural Development Office was present at this meeting and provided background on the recently held California Economic Summit. Dr. Humiston noted that this is the first time a category for working landscapes has been added to one of seven summit action categories. Adding the category was important given the fact that the general public do not see agriculture as a good investment although it is an important part of the California economy. Dr. Humiston noted that there are five action items including an item

on database modeling. There were close correlations with what was discussed at the Economic Summit and the work on Ecosystem Services that the Science Panel is involved with. Dr. Gunasekara attended the summit held on November 7, 2013, and participated on the working landscapes action team.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 4 – AGRICULTURE CATEGORY FOR GEELA**

Nilan Watmore was present at this meeting and provided an update on work to establish an agriculture category in the Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Awards (GEELA) as recommended at the October 23, 2013 meeting. This work will be consistent with Section 566 (a) of the Food and Ag Code which is designed to incentivize growers to practice environmental stewardship on their working lands. Mr. Watmore provided background information on the GEELA award for the Science Panel members and benefit of having an agriculture category. The application process begins in May, 2014. Therefore, GEELA language should be completed for the agriculture category by then and provided to Mr. Watmore for consideration. CDFA will use the Qualitative Assessment Model, developed by the Science Panel, as part of evaluating the agriculture category applications. The Science Panel proposed the following title for the GEELA agriculture category; Ecosystem Services from Agriculture and Working Lands. The criteria for scoring the applications would be selected by staff in CDFA who participate in the review of the GEELA applications.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 5 – FUTURE DIRECTION**

Many of the initial objectives for the Science Panel had been completed over the past two years. The objective and subsequent actions to complete those objectives are described in the Science Panel biannual report; <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/EnvironmentalStewardship/pdfs/SciencePanelReport.pdf>. Therefore, discussion of the Panel's future direction and projects needed to be discussed. There was discussion that the Panel should address specific issues related permitting. For example, it was noted from a grower that a air quality permit for a biodigester cost \$12,000 but the same permit for propane is significantly less. Discussion ensued that the Science Panel could evaluate the reasons for this and suggest changes that might bring the permits into a reasonable cost for growers working to implement biodigesters on working lands.

Ms. Gretz noted that the topic and work of Ecosystem Services completed by the Science Panel should be included into the recently released report titled California @ 50 million; The Governor's Environmental Goals and Policy Report. The report was produced by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research. Discussion ensued on the importance of adding more specific information on the economic and health significance of agriculture in California into Chapter 1 of the report.

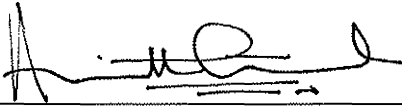
Another topic of focus proposed by Ms. Gretz was on the issue of food safety and environmental impact of farming, including water quality and biodiversity. There could be conflicting issues given new federal food safety modernization act (FSMA) requirements. For example a project can be completed to understand how food safety auditors could interpret new FSMA rules that conflict with state water regulations.

The Science Panel also requested a copy of the recently completed final report for the CDFA led Nitrogen Tracking and Reporting Taskforce. Dr. Gunasekara noted that he would provide members with a copy of the report.

**AGENDA ITEM 5. NEXT MEETING DATE**

Ms. Gretz offered to host the next meeting in King City. Dr. Gunasekara will organize a Doodle poll to gather member availabilities. The expected time period for the next meeting would be April, 2014. The meeting was adjourned at 2 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:



Amrith Gunasekara, Ph.D.

04/8/2014  
Date