

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

California Department of Food and Agriculture
Remotely Hosted to Accommodate Covid-19 Safety Measures

**October 14, 2021
9 AM to 3 PM**

Remote Access

https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/efasap/meetings_presentations.html

MEETING MINUTES

Panel Member in Attendance

Jeff Dlott, LandScan (Chair and Member, In Attendance)
Vicky Dawley, Tehama RCD (Vice Chair and Member, In Attendance)
Michelle Buffington, PhD, CalEPA, California Air Resources Board (Member, In Attendance)
Scott Couch, CalEPA, State Water Board, (Member, Kelsey Moore, Environmental Scientist from SWRCB, in attendance for Scott Couch)
Don Cameron, Terranova Ranch (Member, In Attendance)
Leonard Diggs, Pie Ranch (Member, In Attendance)
Keali'i Bright, DOC (Member, In Attendance)
Amanda Hansen, CNRA (Member, In Attendance)
Judith Redmond, Full Belly Farm (Member, In Attendance)
Greg Norris, USDA NRCS (Subject Matter Expert, In Attendance)
Doug Parker, PhD, UC ANR (Subject Matter Expert, In Attendance)

State Agency Staff and Presenters

Amrith Gunasekara, PhD, CDFA
Geetika Joshi, PhD, CDFA
Emily Zakowski, CDFA
Scott Weeks, CDFA
Carolyn Cook, CDFA

AGENDA ITEM 1 – Chair and Member Introductions

The public meeting of the Environmental Farming Act Science Advisory Panel was called to order at 9:02 am by Chair Dlott. The Panel members introduced themselves. A quorum was established.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – Minutes

The Panel reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting, held in July 2021. Member Cameron introduced a motion to approve the minutes. Member Buffington seconded the motion. The motion was approved by all.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation; Updates and Ecosystem Services Definition

Dr. Amrith Gunasekara from CDFA indicated that OEFI was not ready to give an update on the ecosystem services definitions at this time. Dr. Gunasekara proposed that to facilitate this process, he will be working with Member Diggs and other members and create an updated definition and bring that to the next meeting for consideration and adoption. Chair Dlott volunteered to help with this process.

Dr. Gunasekara gave an update to the panel on the amount of funding allocated to OEFI this year.

He indicated that any new programs developed as a result of the funding will be brought before the Panel during development. For the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program, \$100 million was allocated between 2021-2023 through General Funds. The SWEEP solicitation will be released soon, and CDFA staff will discuss SWEEP public comments later during this meeting. Since 2014, \$80.5 million has been awarded through SWEEP, totaling in 828 projects. In addition, five percent or no less than \$5 million will be used for technical assistance grants. The amount appropriated is available for encumbrance until June 30, 2023. Chair Dlott asked a question in regard to having enough staffing to account for the additional funds. Dr. Gunasekara indicated that the SWEEP program staff would not be expanding because these are one-time funds and not continuous appropriations. To help with and distribute the workload, the application window is being expanded from 2 months to 4 months and will be a first come first serve process.

The Healthy Soils Program was allocated \$160 million between 2021-2023 from General Funds and CCI funds. Since 2017, \$40.7 million has been awarded to the HSP, totaling in 657 projects. The amount appropriated is available for encumbrance or expenditure until June 30, 2023 and liquidation until June 30, 2027. Member Redmond asked a question in regard to having enough staffing to account for the additional funds. Dr. Gunasekara indicated that the HSP staff would not be expanding because these are one-time funds and not continuous appropriations. To help with the workload, the application window is being expanded to 4 months, and will be a first come first serve process. Member Redmond indicated that she reviewed the public comments and wanted to flag that there were several letters flagging staffing delays. Chair Dlott indicated that this topic will be discussed more in depth during the HSP agenda item.

The Alternative Manure Management Practices Program was allocated \$80 million between 2021-2023 in General Funds. Since 2017, \$68.3 million has been awarded, totaling in 116 projects.

The Conservation Agriculture Planning Grants Program was allocated \$39 million between 2021-2023 in General Funds. Member Redmond asked how the \$7 million for organic transition will be handled. Dr. Gunasekara indicated that the funds will be used for the organic transition plans first, and any remaining funds will be used on other project practices.

The Pollinator Habitat Program was allocated \$30 million between 2021-2023 in General Funds. Dr. Gunasekara indicated that this is currently housed under the "Biodiversity" branch in OEFI. An additional \$10 million allocation will go towards research work. An allocation of \$5 million was awarded to go towards Technical Assistance to assist farmers and ranchers with on-farm water efficiency needs.

The new Cannabis Appellations Program is in the process of developing rulemaking for this program, and there was an allocation of \$9 million in General Funds to implement a cannabis pilot project. Currently cannabis is not an eligible crop to be funded in OEFI incentive programs.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – Conservation Agricultural Planning Grants Program (CAPGP); Updates

Presentation by Emily Zakowski from CDFA. The program is currently in its second round of public comments. Ms. Zakowski presented on the background of the program, applicant eligibility, and public comments. Ms. Zakowski provided a summary of public comments; 84 total were received, 42 were unique, and 10 comments were accepted. Key changes covered a number of topics including expanding eligible applicants, and applications being on a competitive basis. Dr. Gunasekara followed up to clarify that they are still determining the costs for the development of carbon farm plans. He indicated that the cost caps specified in the request for grant applications might increase if needed to account for the costs of the carbon farm planning work.

Expert Norris asked to review the different CAPs possible and asked what the \$7 million would focus on. Dr. Gunasekara clarified that the funding will go towards supporting organic system planning (CAP 138). It was also clarified that if all the \$7 million is not spent towards organic system

planning (CAP 138), it will go towards other planning activities. Expert Norris commented on USDA NRCS' experience working with these plans. He indicated that there is more interest in other plans like irrigation management, and grazing management plans. He indicated that with regulations like SGMA there will be more interest in funding for the development of mandatory plans.

AGENDA ITEM 5 – State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP); Updates -

Presentation by Scott Weeks from CDFA. Dr. Gunasekara introduced the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program. Dr. Gunasekara noted that public comments are now posted online. Mr. Weeks provided an update on the funding timeline for the solicitation release – the solicitation is expected to be released October 2021 and have a 4-month review period. Mr. Weeks presented an overview of the major changes to the draft request for grant applications for the program including first-come, first-serve application review, addition of priority populations, addition of sub-surface drip irrigation of manure effluent practice, funding cap increase to \$200,000, and some changes to additional considerations. Mr. Weeks discussed the review process for grant acceptance including the administrative review and technical review. Mr. Weeks shared other information on the program requirements. Dr. Gunasekara commented in regard to public comment on the increased cap in that it will decrease the number of grants and help with administrative functions.

Member Redmond inquired about application amount and number, noting that it is the goal to facilitate all grants do not limit the number of grants. Member Redmond also noted the Technical Assistance Providers had comments that the rolling application process is not conducive for small farms and financially disadvantaged farmers. Expert Parker questioned if rolling applications won't be a problem with the large budget increase, this may address the issue. Member Buffington provided a comment on options for dealing with equity in grant application process and suggested a lottery system which would remove the time constraint. Dr. Gunasekara noted that the funding for 2021-2022 is unprecedented and CDFA is addressing the increase in funding with the longer application window and rolling application process which will help the technical assistance providers, grant applicants, and CDFA staff. Expert Parker suggested that CDFA looking at allocations when halfway through funding and assess the equity of granted projects. Dr. Gunasekara noted that CDFA will be looking at equity and funding during the entire application period due to certain program requirements.

Member Diggs suggested CDFA needs to expand in-reach to disadvantaged communities using technical assistance providers to maximize impact. Chair Dlott asked if CDFA tracks success of technical assistance providers on the grants they assist with. Dr. Gunasekara indicating yes to the tracking of technical assistance providers, and also added that CDFA is working with technical assistance providers to increase the technical assistance response time. Member Hansen flagged for the group that the natural and working lands climate smart strategy has been released and has recommendations for how to scale implementation, especially related to regional technical assistance/capacity. Member Cameron inquired about the potential to link or list technical assistance providers within the application to facilitate connection to assistance. Dr. Gunasekara thanked Member Cameron for this suggestion and stated that CDFA will follow through on this suggestion.

Member Redmond indicated she was happy to hear that the funding has increased for this round and inquired about non-CCI funding allocation that may be able to be used more freely to address equity issues. Member Redmond suggested an ad-hoc subcommittee to look at General Fund use to address equity issues in climate-smart ag programs.

Chair Dlott requested to close the discussion on the rolling application and added that this year is a pilot trial for working with the large budget increase.

Member Redmond inquired about the categorizing of rolling applications as an informational item. Chair Dlott stated that the role of the committee is not to detail program functionality, but to discuss

framework of these programs. Dr. Gunasekara agreed with the role of the committee and overview suggestions that CDFA can follow up on. Dr. Gunasekara stated these changes would be run by the Secretary but not put out for another 30-day public comment period because of urgency in getting the funding allocated for SWEEP and HSP. Dr. Gunasekara stated that the grant agreements should be signed by June 30th, 2022. Member Redmond thanked CDFA for their responsiveness to public comment and the committee suggestions but emphasized that the technical assistance and community groups have to have their comments be listened to and considered at some point.

Chair Dlott stated the importance of this discussion and emphasized the flexibility on addressing the public comments. Member Hansen asked Dr. Gunasekara how CDFA will address public comments that came in and how they will be incorporated into the programs. Dr. Gunasekara replied that public comments that can be easily incorporated are included in this year's solicitation but comments which require further work are explored and incorporated into later solicitations if found possible. Member Hansen requested a reminder for the scope of the panel's engagement. Dr. Gunasekara clarified that the framework of these grant programs is run through the Science Panel and when major changes are voted through, these changes are then run by the Secretary and incorporated.

Chair Dlott summarized the state of the conversation around public comment suggestions including rolling admission and removal of GHG requirements. Member Dawley stated that they are reluctant to drop GHG requirements from the SWEEP program given today's climate crisis. Member Cameron agreed with Member Dawley. Chair Dlott would like Expert or Liaison input on GHG requirements. Expert Parker explained there are no GHG savings with surface water currently and that the logistics for assessing this are complicated but could be evaluated. Member Cameron described a drip system example from Imperial Valley as one desert program that did fit well in SWEEP. Dr. Gunasekara added to Member Parker's comments by remarking water savings and GHG savings are limited to the grantee's farm boundary because these savings are difficult to calculate at larger scales. Chair Dlott ended the discussion and moved to address the next agenda item.

AGENDA ITEM 6 – Healthy Soils Program (HSP); Updates

Dr. Joshi greeted members and provided an overview on next steps, proposed HSP updates, and public comments on the Healthy Soils Program but emphasized the team is still working on the responses to these comments. Dr. Joshi provided updates to the Healthy Soils Program including eligibility and exclusions, program requirements, project verification requirements, CDFA HSP RePlan Tool, Comet Planner Tool, Electronic Application Platform, Incentives Program payment rates, and changes to outreach requirements and types of demonstration projects. Dr. Joshi stated draft request for grant applications was available for public comment September 9 – September 23rd, 2021 and will provide the committee an overview of the received public comments.

Dr. Joshi provided an overview of public comments that pertained to both incentive and demonstration projects which addressed eligibility, practices, program requirements, scope, funding, reporting, and miscellaneous. Dr. Joshi also described suggestions to program requirements including clarification on practices, additional practices added, and reducing reporting requirements or making reporting requirements to be more flexible. Dr. Joshi also highlighted requests for translation of program materials into other languages, regional variation in costs, invest in state technical support to farmers. Dr. Joshi also covered comments specific to incentive programs. Dr. Joshi mentioned demonstration specific comments which involved potential extension of projects to 3-4 years, additions of new practices, allowing Type A demonstration projects to only cover potential practices, clarification and reduction of outreach requirements, clarification on past performance evaluation for grantees.

Dr. Joshi outlined HSP next steps which include posting responses to public comments on the HSP website, host technical assistance program and UCCE trainings in October 2021, release the

solicitation October 2021 and run the application period for 4 months, implement projects as early as January 2022. Dr. Joshi requested questions on the overview.

Member Redmond brought to the panel's attention to two public comment letters which stated frustration with the reporting and paperwork requirements for HSP. Dr. Joshi outlined the program funding process which is based on practice verification and release of standard payment - this requires change requests if grantees would like to change their grant agreements. Dr. Joshi stated the importance that project change requests must be approved prior to implementation to make sure grantees understand what can be funded from HSP and does not lead to unfortunate surprises for the grantee. Member Redmond acknowledged the stated process but highlighted the potential need to lessen the burden on the current staff by increasing staff numbers. Member Redmond also stressed emphasizing incorporating discussions into the technical assistance program training.

Member Redmond expressed a desire to hear the responses of those in the field to these discussions. Chair Dlott indicated that the committee could agree to open discussion for a directed public comment to discuss these ideas. Member Diggs supported opening a specific public comment for HSP. Chair Dlott opened for public comment for HSP.

Public Member Asha Shama, from the Pesticide Action Network, commented that the reporting requirements are overly burdensome, they do not support the rolling application process, and they are concerned that CDFA will not be expanding their administrative support with the increased budget. She expressed her support for more technical assistance program trainings. She additionally requested that the HSP include in the request for grant applications integrated pest management and other practices that would reduce pesticide/herbicide usage on farms.

Public Member Jessie Cantor, from the UC Cooperative Extension and Small Farms Team in Fresno County, initially thanked members for comments, and emphasized that the HSP should focus on the adoption of practices versus just GHG emissions reductions. They proposed the creation of an ad-hoc committee to examine equity issues and potential flexibility within the program. They critiqued that the HSP does not help farmers that do crop rotations and that practices should be allowed to be applied to various parts of the project fields. Many farmers that have diverse crop rotations have been historically underserved, and the HSP does not support them in this regard.

Public Member Sacha Lozano, from the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz, expressed appreciation for all the work already done on the program, however did emphasize that the HSP needs to focus on equity more to include small underrepresented farmers. They expressed concern that practices being implemented on the same field for 3 years disadvantages small farms and/or socially disadvantaged farms due to constraints on crop rotations. They expressed understanding the scientific argument on having a practice on a field for 3 years, however emphasized HSP should also focus on adoption practice.

Public Member Brian Shobe, from the California Climate and Agriculture Network, commented that CDFA is not responsive and sometimes even dismissive of public comments. He also expressed frustration that these agenda items were informational and not action items, which would be more appropriate. He clarified the role of the Science Panel and cited that in statute, the Science Panel can advise on implementation details of the programs. He seconded the comments from previous stakeholders and commented that the meeting agenda needs to be clear so that stakeholders know when they can provide input on items.

Public Member Emily Winfield, from the North Coast Soil Hub, expressed the desire to see CDFA be more responsive and accepting of feedback from stakeholders. Additionally, to critically review the administrative and reporting requirements for the program as they are too burdensome for grantees. Suggested that this review could take the form of an interagency panel to review the program requirements. She also indicated that it was deeply troubling that no additional HSP staff

were going to be added on. Additionally she expressed support for the application process to be competitive instead of first come first serve.

Public Member Nadji Johnson from Series Imagery Company, expressed support for SWEEP and the promotion of new technologies into the SWEEP program.

Public Member John Gilchrist, from Climate Center, suggested the review of small and mid-size farmers first in the application process and to remove the rolling application basis (allocating 30-50% of fund for these farmers). Also commented that reporting requirement schedules should be reexamined to be more in line with less busy times in farmers work schedules.

Public Member Sarah Light, an Extension Educator, expressed concerns over the reporting requirements for the incentives and demonstration projects. She indicated that it is unclear why the demonstration projects require 2 reports per year, and why multiple files are required for Project Change Requests. She expressed the desire for more flexibility on outreach requirements due to covid, and the focus on higher quality events - quality over quantity. She emphasized that CCAs and PCAs should be included in outreach requirements, and that the first come first serve application basis does not benefit small and/or disadvantaged farmers.

Public Member Sri Sethuratnam, from the Center for Land Based Learning, emphasized the importance of having longer term projects, suggesting a 5-year program duration. Also commented that the program is receiving an unprecedented amount of funding, therefore it can make unprecedented changes as well.

Public Member Arohi Sharma, a Water Policy Analyst and Soil Health Analyst with Natural Resources Defense Council, echoed the comments of the other stakeholders and emphasized that the HSP program is set up in a way that disadvantages diversified farms. Also expressed concerns on the first-come, first-serve application process and that it does not support equity.

Chair Dlott asked for comments from the panel in response to public comment period. Member Dawley emphasized the contrast between inflexibility in spending public dollars versus stakeholders time and availability. Member Dawley pointed out that technical assistance providers are supposed to be the bridge for individuals to assist them with grant applications, invoicing, reporting to help them and emphasized that it is unfortunate that providers are the ones providing comments that the program isn't working equitably. Member Dawley also stated that the competitive application period will slow down funding and indicated that technical assistance providers, longer funding periods, and larger grant amounts should make the rolling application more equitable and work more smoothly. Member Dawley addressed outreach programs requirements and Covid issues and provided a proposal for changing who counts for outreach as a good idea for future solicitations. Member Diggs stated that the rolling application period seems to disenfranchise those that the HSP program should serve and stated that creative solutions should be considered. Member Redmond appreciated the comments from the public and emphasized the importance of listening to these comments to make sure HSP grantees experiences are positive. Dr. Gunasekara responded to comments for staffing concerns indicating that 5% of funds for administrative staff and a requirement for long term project management and requirement for employment which may outlast short term increases in funding. Dr. Gunasekara highlighted that 2020 funding was 26.5% for socially disadvantaged farmers using a first come, first serve basis. Dr. Gunasekara indicated he would provide farm size and SDFR funding information for SWEEP and HSP programs at next EFA-SAP meeting to provide clarity on dollar distribution. Chair Dlott expressed concern around the potential that HSP had a disproportionate amount of criticism and stated that it must be addressed if that is true but does not know if the criticisms are significant proportion of total population or compared to other grant programs. Chair Dlott asked for data on the perception of HSP to understand the proportion of dissatisfied grantees and stakeholders to better assess what changes should be addressed. Chair Dlott stated that delaying solicitation by changing from rolling application may

result in significant delays in funding and grant efficiencies and would recommend HSP goes forward with the 2021 solicitation as a rolling application and then assesses the results.

AGENDA ITEM 7 – Water Efficiency Technical Assistance Program (WETA); Draft Program Framework

Presentation by Carolyn Cook of CDFA. Ms. Cook outlined the budget for WETA as one-time \$5 million allocated for water efficiency and nutrient management technical assistance. She noted there is a draft solicitation that is accepting public comment currently for 3-year, \$500,000 maximum awards. Ms. Cook provided an overview of the outlined the eligible organizations which included RCD's, UCCE, Non-profit and federally and California-recognized Native American Indian Tribes. Ms. Cook provided an overview of the program.

Expert Parker asked if there would be money allocated for translation assistance. Ms. Cook responded that the program is modeled like the Climate Smart Agriculture Technical Assistance Program which does include translation services. Member Redmond inquired about training. Ms. Cook clarified that training is related to irrigation efficiency related to water, energy, nutrient efficiency. Member Redmond suggested coordination with irrigated lands regulatory program specifically in consideration for organic community nutrient use to make knowledge on this topic more widespread for all irrigation practices trainers. Member Cameron commented that irrigated lands regulatory program does not differentiate between organic and conventional.

Member Cameron also asked if this program would allow Resource Conservation Districts (RCD) to hire a person to work on these evaluations if they don't already have someone on this. Ms. Cook replied positively and stated this would be possible if the RCD can show the person is experienced with water efficiency and administrative experience.

Chair Dlott asked if commodity boards are eligible? Dr. Gunasekara stated that the commodity board will need to evaluate if that board has a non-profit arm and that historically these types of programs have been limited to RCD, UCCE, Non-profits, and Federally- and California-recognized Native American Indian Tribes. Chair Dlott asked if this also includes CSU's and community colleges. Ms. Cook replied yes it does.

AGENDA ITEM 8 – Climate Smart Agriculture Technical Assistance Program; Updates

Presentation by Carolyn Cook of CDFA. Ms. Cook clarified that the technical assistance program covers SWEEP, HSP, and other climate-smart programs. Ms. Cook provided an overview of the work by the program listing a proactive solicitation for HSP and SWEEP technical assistance funding. Ms. Cook also indicated that there will likely be another solicitation for technical assistance upcoming to help with the large budget increase and that an update on this will be presented at the next EFA-SAP meeting.

Chair Dlott inquired if all money is typically expended for the technical assistance providers to see if these providers could assist with the grant funding increase. Ms. Cook indicated that the funding has been under subscribed consistently. Chair Dlott emphasized that this would be a very good opportunity for programs in underserved areas to take advantage of to help with fulfilling grant program requirements. Dr. Gunasekara noted that it is difficult to put out a solicitation without knowing the dollar amount available, but it must be done to give enough time to get the technical assistance program contracts in place before the grant incentive program solicitation is released. Chair Dlott asked for clarification on the timing of the technical assistance program solicitation release. Ms. Cook indicated that there is not yet a timeline available for AMMP and the Pollinator Habitat Program, but that HSP and SWEEP technical assistance provider awards were announced in July 2021. The technical assistance providers awarded for these programs will be ready for assisting with HSP and SWEEP solicitations this October. Chair Dlott asked if there might be funds available for implementation in addition to application given the expected increase in grant applicants and new grantees. Ms. Cook indicated that HSP has only had one solicitation release

with technical assistance providers available and this has been an important collaboration between farmers and technical assistance providers for applying and participating in HSP. Dr. Gunasekara clarified that the current technical assistance providers grant agreements do allow for on-going grant assistance in addition to the application, including project change requests. Member Parker seconded and pointed out that the technical assistance providers spend a lot of time on assisting with the implementation phase.

AGENDA ITEM 9 – Public Comments

Chair Dlott opened the public comment period for all agenda items.

Public Member Brian Shobe, from the California Climate and Agriculture Network, offered a compromise for the application review process where a portion of funds are released for first come first serve, then a portion is held until the end of the 4-month application period to allow more time for application submittal and provide time for CDFA staff to assess the equity statistics on the funding awarded. He emphasized previous statistics that less complex applications were submitted last time there was a first come first serve application process. He requested a motion to vote on this proposal. Additionally, he commented for SWEEP that keeping the funding cap limit would allow more grants to be awarded, and that during the SWEEP advisory group process, the topic of increasing the cost cap was never brought up as a topic of concern.

Public Member Katy Patterson, from American Farmland Trust, indicated that they will be providing written comments on the CAPGP that will reflect compatibility with new legislation, including language on groundwater sustainability, and the prioritization of high and medium priority basins in conservation planning funding efforts.

Public Member Rebekah Weber, from CCOF, commented on the CAPGP in that CDFA should create a separate organic transition plan program.

Public Member Asha Sharma supported CCOF's comments for the need to make a separate organic transitional program.

Chair Dlott opened up the floor for comment and Member Redmond indicated she wanted to discuss the rolling application process further and consider the public comment "pause" proposal from Brian Shobe. Member Hansen asked what would need to happen to the guidelines if this application process changed. Dr. Gunasekara clarified that it would be like closing and opening a new solicitation all over again. Member Diggs clarified that accepting applications would not be paused, but the awarding would be, and expressed caution that this change in application acceptance would need to be communicated clearly to the public. Member Cameron expressed concern over not having enough interest based on changing the application process and not being able to allocate all the funds if there was the change. Dr. Gunasekara indicated that in general the HSP and SWEEP programs are oversubscribed by 150-200%. Member Cameron expressed concern over HSP specifically. Dr. Gunasekara referenced the statistics for the 2020 HSP, and out of the \$25 million available, the over-subscription rate was 192%, and it could have been higher. Chair Dlott stated that the program now has 3 times the amount of funding from the 2020 year. Chair Dlott expressed desire to focus on the key issue of equity and how lack of technical assistance providers will still be an issue regardless of the application process. Chair Dlott inquired if more funding could be provided for technical assistance services. Member Dawley expressed concern based on comments received about confusing program requirements, and that if the application acceptance process changed, it might create more confusion. Member Redmond expressed desire to get back to the comment from Chair Dlott on Technical Assistance.

Chair Dlott then asked for Member comments on the proposed funding cap increase for SWEEP. Member Diggs expressed mixed feelings because implementation costs have increased but increasing the cost cap would limit the amount of applications awarded. Member Cameron suggested a compromise of \$150,000 cost cap. Member Buffington suggested a higher incentive

value for socially disadvantaged farmers. Dr. Gunasekara commented that with the 25% SDFR rule, there have been 49% for SWEEP and 26% for HSP for SDFR applicants. Expert Norris mentioned that in NRCS they have 2 rates, 1 is for historically underserved producers and the other is a standard rate. Member Hansen didn't feel prepared weigh in on this question but is open to further the conversations.

Chair Dlott refocused on the comments regarding equity and the solicitation release and proposed the formation of a subcommittee to identify best solicitation options moving forward to address underlying equity issues. Member Cameron wanted to emphasize that any action should not delay the release of funds this year. Chair Dlott clarified that this subcommittee would work on decisions for the next solicitations, and that the current solicitations would move forward with minimal changes as needed. Member Buffington indicated that CARB would be happy to join in the subcommittee and partner with CDFA in these discussions. Chair Dlott suggested USDA and DWR also be part of the conversation. Member Diggs suggested a motion for the following: 1) CDFA staff to continue the current expedited solicitations, while taking into consideration the public comments received, and 2) next year's solicitations will be updated based on a comprehensive analysis of solicitation types across several program, with the focus of improving access and equity. This motion was seconded by Member Cameron, and the Panel unanimously passed this motion.

The Members asked for clarification on if the motion included the SWEEP funding cost cap. Member Diggs proposed an amendment to include SWEEP into the previously passed motion. Member Diggs accepted the amendment and the Panel unanimously passed the amended motion.

AGENDA ITEM 10 – Next Meeting

Dr. Gunasekara indicated that the next meeting would be January 13, 2022. The location has yet to be determined and may possibly be remotely held.

Chair Dlott introduced the motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was moved by Member Cameron and seconded by Member Buffington. Panel members unanimously voted to adjourn. Meeting was adjourned at 2:44 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Amrith Gunasekara, Ph.D.
Liaison to the Environmental Farming Act Science Advisory Panel