

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

CDFA Auditorium
1220 N Street
Sacramento, CA

May 18, 2017
9:30 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.

MEETING MINUTES

Panel Members in Attendance

Don Cameron (Chair and Member)
Vicky Dawley (Member)
Jeff Dlott, PhD. (Member)
Julie Alvis, Natural Resources Agency (Member)
Bruce Gwynn (filling in for David Bunn, PhD.), Natural Resources Agency (Member)
Scott Couch, State Water Resources Control Board (Member)
Emily Wimberger, PhD. Air Resources Board (Member)
Luana Kiger, MSc. USDA NRCS (Subject Matter Expert)
Doug Parker, PhD. UC ANR (Subject Matter Expert)

State Agency Staff and Presenters

Bonnie Soriano, MSc. Air Resources Board
Benjamin Nicholson, Air Resources Board
Matthew Harrison, Air Resources Board
Guihua Chen, PhD. CDFA
Geetika Joshi, PhD. CDFA
Amrith Gunasekara, PhD. CDFA

AGENDA ITEM 1 - Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 9:34 AM by the Chair, Mr. Don Cameron. Introductions were made. Present at the meeting were all the members noted above under "Panel Members in Attendance". A quorum of six members was established.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – Minutes from Previous Meeting

Chair Cameron introduced the minutes from the March 16, 2017 meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Gwynn to accept the minutes as presented by CDFA staff and the motion was seconded by Ms. Alvis. The motion was moved by all members present and accepted without further changes.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – Healthy Soils Program (HSP)

A summary of activities related to the HSP was provided by Dr. Joshi. Dr. Chen provided background of the Healthy Soils Initiative and overview of HSP followed by a summary of the public comments received during January 1 to April 21, 2017 public comment period. Staff from the Air Resources Board (ARB) also provided an update on the Quantification Methodologies for the Science Panel members.

There were a total of 37 emails comments/comment letters covering five categories: funding, compost application, incentives and demonstration programs and others. Dr. Joshi responded to each public comment by either providing a direct answer or noting that it is addressed in the programmatic framework.

Questions were entertained by CDFA staff from Panel members. Chair Cameron inquired about the eligibility of leased lands as leasing terms may vary and not be consistent with the project implementation term of three years. Dr. Gunasekara noted that CDFA will evaluate this inquiry further and will be open to suggestions and recommendations by panel members. He noted that the application will request the landowner to provide information to CDFA to ensure funded practices be conducted and maintained in the project term and meet the programmatic requirements. Suggestions were made to ensure the landowner is involved in cases of leased land during the project term.

Dr. Diott inquired if demonstration projects will lead to increased adoption on other agricultural lands/farms to bring about greater greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions. Dr. Parker asked if the demonstration projects will address and document other multiple benefits besides GHG reductions. Dr. Gunasekara noted that both these questions are being taken into consideration in the programmatic framework and CDFA is looking to include such characteristics into the HSP and application.

Several questions on compost were facilitated by CDFA staff. CDFA staff referred members to the Compost Application White Paper report that was developed through the Science Panel. CDFA noted that details on compost sources and use are highlighted in the report and that these details will be further reflected in the solicitation for clarity.

Ms. Wimberger inquired about technical assistance for the HSP. CDFA noted that technical assistance will be provided by funds allocated from the Strategic Growth Council in the amount of \$25,000.

Members inquired about the standard payment rates for each practice and for greater clarity in what the payment rates covered. CDFA staff provided explanation of what costs are covered in the standard payment rates adopted from USDA NRCS including cost for labor, equipment and seed for cover crops. Ms. Kiger noted that USDA NRCS pays 50% of the total cost. CDFA staff noted that payment rates will be doubled since HSP covers the total cost for awardees in the first two years.

Dr. Jeff Diott asked for clarification on who are eligible as applicants and if industry and grower associations will be eligible for Demonstration Projects. Dr. Joshi stated that the primary or lead applicants the HSP are targeting on the Demonstration Projects are not-for-profit entities and other entities such as farmer or industry can be collaborators which may bring matching funds to the projects.

Members inquired about the timeline for the HSP including public comment period, how matching funds are required for the third year of participation, if costs for monitoring are covered by HSP funds, whether the technical reviewers will be the same for both programs. CDFA staff responded to the comments and noted that monitoring costs are covered by the program and the technical reviewers are different for each program with incentive applications being reviewed by experts at the university level and demonstration projects being reviewed by state scientists.

Requests were made by members to include more details on Disadvantage Community requirements (Ms. Wimberger) and provide clear and easy to follow application guidelines

(Ms. Alvis).

AGENDA ITEM 4 – Public Comment

Several questions and comments from the public were heard. They included reasons as to why on-farm compost is not being considered in the program and why at least one soil management practice must be included in all applications. Comments from the public attendees included noting that USDA NRCS payments are too low, requirements for baseline soil data requires more time and may not be required to stand up to the HSP, application requirements described in the presentation seem complicated, allocated additional review points to co-benefits and ecosystem services, ensure that any grasslands in the program are grazed grasslands, include on-farm composting in the HSP, the 200 person requirement for demonstration projects are too high, might be difficult to secure matching funds for demonstration projects, combination of monitoring for GHGs and demonstration projects are not practical, insufficient funding amounts for GHG monitoring as part of the demonstration projects and that the solicitation must be released for public comment prior to being released for collecting applications.

AGENDA ITEM 5 – EFA SAP Recommendations for the CDFA HSP

In consideration of the comments made by the Science Panel members and the public, Chair Cameron advised CDFA staff to work to include as many suggestions and comments into the HSP solicitation and finalize the Request for Applications (RFA). Chair Cameron recommended, along with other members of the Science Panel, that the solicitation be posted for a two week public comment period and consideration of those public comments prior to its release. CDFA staff noted that they will finalize the solicitation (RFA) and release it for public comment. CDFA staff will also provide an update on the comments at the next Science Panel meeting as an informational item.

AGENDA ITEM 6 – Next Meeting and Location

Dr. Gunasekara noted that the next meeting is scheduled for July 20, 2017 in Berkeley California. The meeting will held on the campus of the University of California. The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:



Amrith Gunasekara, Ph.D.

05/18/17
Date