

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

**Mendocino County Administrative Center
501 Low Gap Road, Conference Room C
Ukiah, CA 95482**

March 4, 2015

MEETING MINUTES

Panel Members

Don Cameron, Member and Chair
Mike Tollstrup, Member
Jocelyn Bridson, MSc, Member
Jeff Dlott, PhD, Member

Subject Matter Experts

Luana Kiger, MSc, Subject Matter Expert

State Agency Staff

Amrith Gunasekara, PhD (CDFA)
Nilan Watmore, MSc (CalEPA)

AGENDA ITEM 1 and 2

The meeting was called to order at 1:10 p.m. by the Chair, Mr. Don Cameron. Introductions were made and a quorum was established. Members present at the meeting included Mr. Cameron, Dr. Dlott (phone), Mr. Tollstrup and Ms. Bridson. Subject matter expert Ms. Kiger was also present. Introductions were made.

PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

There was a delay in producing the minutes from the December 19, 2014 meeting. Dr. Gunasekara noted the minutes would be presented at the next Science Panel meeting to be held in May or June, 2015.

STATE WATER EFFICIENCY AND ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (SWEEP)

An update was provided on the implementation of the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP) by CDFA. Mr. Cameron noted that those projects involving the connection of pumps to utility lines (energy grid) might not be completed in time for the verification component to take place. Mr. Cameron noted that sending a letter out to the award recipients and highlighted the importance of completing the projects would be beneficial to CDFA and the growers. Dr. Gunasekara noted that CDFA will compile a letter to inform the award recipients of the importance of completing the projects by June 30, 2015 and explore other opportunities, such as contacting the utilities, to ensure interconnect issues do not delay project completion and the verification component.

BIOCHAR

Following the December 19, 2014 meeting which was focused on Biochar, Dr. Gunasekara noted that he is in discussions with the CDFA Fertilizer Research and Education Program (FREP) about potential funding to fund research on biochar use rate recommendations through

experimental field trials for different crops. The next solicitation for research will be released in September of 2015 and CDFA plans to include funding for biochar, a soil amendment, use rate research as one of several research priorities in the request for proposals.

HEALTHY SOIL INITIATIVE

An update on the State Healthy Soils Initiative was provided by CDFA. This initiative to incentivize and build the organic matter content of our agricultural soils for climate change resiliency and other multiple benefits from healthy soils was included in the Governor's January budget. This initiative is timely because 2015 has been memorialized by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization after they recognized 2015 as the Year of the Soil. CDFA has been working closely with agency leaders and the administration to evaluate existing state agency efforts on healthy soils and will develop short and long term actions. Dr. Gunasekara noted that the Healthy Soil Initiative will be a primary topic of discussion at the next EFA SAP meeting to be held in May or June, 2015.

AGENDA ITEM 3. FARMED SMART CERTIFICATION

The EFA SAP has been interested in learning more about a recent effort by the Pacific Northwest Direct Seed Association who is partnering with farmers to develop a new certification program called Farmed Smart. The certification would provide a "safe harbor" from regulatory agencies that support the program. CDFA had organized to have Ms. Kay Meyer, Executive Director of the program, to remotely call-in and present an overview of the program. Ms. Meyer was unavailable and therefore this agenda item will be revisited in a future EFA SAP meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 4. GEELA

Mr. Watmore noted that the Governor's Environmental and Education Leadership Award (GEELA) categories were in the process of being reorganized. One of the goals of the reorganization would be to ensure that agricultural applications are submitted to one category rather than multiple categories as evident from the 2014 applications. Mr. Watmore was seeking input from EFA SAP members on the most effective way to organize and frame the agricultural category for the 2015 solicitation. Mr. Watmore also was seeking feedback on how to provide greater outreach to the agricultural community on GEELA to ensure more applications. Dr. Gunasekara noted that CDFA will distribute the announcement for applications (when released in May or June, 2015) via several internal email lists, University of California Cooperative Extension, the Ag Commissioners, Resource Conservation Districts, via the CDFA blog post and the EFA SAP members.

AGENDA ITEM 5. PUBLIC COMMENT AND OTHER ITEMS OF DISCUSSION

Ms. Kiger noted that in the 2014 Farm Bill, farm insurance was relinked to conservation practices. She noted that some outreach by CDFA to growers would be helpful since not all California farmers might know about this change. Dr. Gunasekara noted that CDFA would assist in outreach efforts to farmers. The next EFA SAP meeting would be scheduled in May or June, 2015, with the location to be determined. The meeting was adjourned at 3:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:



Amrith Gunasekara, Ph.D.

7/17/15
Date