

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

California Department of Food and
Agriculture Main Auditorium
1220 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814
July 19, 2018

MEETING MINUTES

Panel Member in Attendance

Jocelyn Bridson, MSc, Rio Farms, (Chair and Member)
Don Cameron, Terranova Ranch (Member)
Julie Alvis, Natural Resources Agency (Member)
Emily Wimberger, CalEPA, ARB (Member)
Doug Parker, PhD. UC ANR (Subject Matter Expert)
Tom Hedt, USDA NRCS (Subject Matter Expert)
Brianna St. Pierre, State Water Resources Control Board *for*
Scott Couch, State Water Resources Control Board (Member)

State Agency Staff and Presenters

Scott Weeks, CDFA
Guihua Chen, PhD, CDFA
Ravneet Behla, PhD, CDFA
Carolyn Cook, MSc, CDFA
Geetika Joshi, PhD, CDFA
Amrith Gunasekara, PhD, CDFA
Karen Ross, Secretary, CDFA

AGENDA ITEM 1 – Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 AM by the Chair, Jocelyn Bridson. Introductions were made. Presented at the meeting were all the members noted above under “Panel Members in Attendance.” A quorum, according to the EFA SAP bylaws, is majority members plus one member for a total of six members. Four members were present at the last meeting and therefore a quorum was not established. Secretary Karen Ross also attended the meeting and was introduced by Chair Bridson.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – SWEEP Update

Carolyn Cook of CDFA provided an update on the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Project (SWEEP). She updated the members of the EFA SAP on previous awards, noting that \$ 62.7 million were awarded to 614 projects. These

projects were supported by \$40.8 million in matching funds. The program impacted 113,994 acres.

Ms. Cook informed the EFA SAP that future SWEEP funding allocations have been approved through Proposition 68 on June 5, 2018, for \$20 million. CDFA SWEEP staff are recommending dispersing these funds in two solicitations of \$10 million each. No major changes to the program from the 2017 solicitation are expected. Proposition 68 allows for 5% as administrative costs and 10% for technical assistance and post project tracking. A draft of the Request for Grant Application (RFA) document is being prepared and would be published for a 30-day public comment period following the EFA SAP meeting. CDFA staff will hold three workshops in Northern, Central and Southern California to solicit public feedback on the draft RFA. Proposition 68 requires 20% of the funds must be allocated to projects in severely disadvantaged communities. Ms. Cook informed EFA SAP members that stormwater capturing and recycled water use will be added to the program under additional considerations. She further noted that CDFA is working on new application platform. She also briefed the panel on tentative timeline for next RFA solicitation.

EFA SAP members posed several comments and questions. Member Cameron applauded CDFA for the success of the program and appreciated the changes proposed by the staff. Chair Bridson inquired if stormwater capture has been included in the water savings calculator. Ms. Cook responded that CDFA staff is still evaluating different ways to include such changes. Member Dawley asked if there is a way to identify if an applicant themselves applies, compared to an applicant who was assisted by a contractor if those applications can be weighed or ranked higher. Ms. Cook responded that was not a function of the program and the new application platform will likely capture it better than previously used platform and could enhance CDFA-awardee communication. Dr. Parker enquired whether CDFA will target severely disadvantaged communities. Ms. Cook replied that CDFA will target severely disadvantaged communities and would hold workshops in these areas. Member Alvis clarified that 20% funds allocation requirement of the bond funds is a cumulative total for all programs identified in the same chapter of SB 5 (Proposition 68).

Chair Bridson accommodated questions/comments from the public on the SWEEP program. One question involved the possibility of shortening the SWEEP program timeline. Chair Bridson responded that SWEEP receives a significant higher number of applications and technical reviews and CDFA staff need sufficient time to select best application and projects. A comment was made that the panel must be careful in investing in agriculture lands which will not be viable due to regulation and climate impacts on water supply. Member Cameron responded that it is true a portion of land will be fallowed due to lack of irrigation water, therefore it important to install these water conserving technologies to stay viable. Another question inquired if the EFA SAP is considering a joint project that leveraged improvements from both the water district and growers. Secretary Ross responded that CDFA is considering conducting workshops to evaluate the interest of various water districts. Public attendees also suggested to provide SWEEP outreach material in multiple languages and to revive RCD contracts

for future verifications.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – HSP Update

Dr. Geetika Joshi of CDFA provided updates on the Healthy Soils Program (HSP). Dr. Joshi informed the panel that HSP has received \$10 million through Proposition 68 and \$5 million through the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund administered by the California Climate Investments Program. A tentative timeline of activities was shared with EFA SAP members.

Dr. Joshi discussed new practices recommendations proposed to be included into the HSP. She listed the practices which CDFA is recommending for incentive projects and the ones which need further research data and would be included in Type A and B demonstration projects. She also discussed the list of practices which are not recommended for inclusion and provided the reasons. Dr. Joshi informed the EFA SAP members panel about the status of each practice and verification methodology recommended for Type A and B projects and plan for technical assistance. Member Dawley suggested that technical assistance providers should be compensated both for one-on-one as well as for outreach and workshop efforts.

Questions were provided by EFA SAP members. Member Wimberger inquired if the two-funding sources can be combined in one solicitation. Member Dawley inquired whether HSP is designed to exclude research from demonstration projects. Dr. Gunasekara responded that bond does not specify if there is need for demonstration projects and neither does it require that research to be excluded. Chair Bridson suggested that there is a value in demonstration projects, especially on outreach and collaboration. Subject matter expert, Mr. Hedt, suggested that research is important factor to bridge the knowledge gaps. Member Dawley enquired whether on-farm composting is eligible for demonstration project. Dr. Joshi responded that it is eligible as long as the awardee abides by the practice requirements. Chair Bridson asked if the NRCS eVeg manual can be used in either of the project types. Dr. Joshi replied that it can be used for both project types. Member Dawley noted that one-on-one payment rates are low and recommended panel to reconsider increasing these.

Chair Bridson accommodated questions/comments from the public on the HSP program. Public members suggested panel to reconsider excluding the research component in demonstration projects. Another comment made was that technical assistance reimbursement rates are low as suggested and panel should consider involving RCD verifications to improve the collaboration and answer questions that growers might have for these practices. A member of the public suggested that the panel should consider pre-proposal process for awards.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – Public Comments

Several questions and comments from the public were accommodated by Chair Bridson and CDFA staff. These comments are noted in agenda item 2 and 3. A member of the public, Brian Kolodji, of California Engineering Services, gave a brief

presentation to the panel on technology that distributes water pump or commercial exhaust gas into orchards for the purpose of atmospheric carbon dioxide crop fertilization. A comment was made that distribution of flyers and other programmatic materials in Spanish would be helpful. An inquiry was made on why cannabis growers were not eligible for the programs and should be.

AGENDA ITEM 7 – Next Meeting and Location

Dr. Gunasekara stated that the next meeting will be on October 18, 2018, at CDFA headquarters in Sacramento and will cover HSP and SWEEP public comments and potential changes to the draft RFAs. The meeting was adjourned at 1:48 PM by Chair Bridson

Respectfully submitted by:



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

October 18, 2018
Date