

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

**Room G
Harvest Hall
Stanislaus County Agricultural Center
3800 Cornucopia Way
Modesto, Ca 95358**

September 10, 2014

MEETING MINUTES

Panel Members

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

Subject Matter Experts

Luana Kiger, MSc, Subject Matter Expert
Doug Parker, PhD, Subject Matter Expert

CDFA Staff

Crystal Meyers
Sarah Weaver
Amrith Gunasekara, PhD
Carolyn Cook, MSc

AGENDA ITEM 1

PREVIOUS MEETINGS' MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by the Chair, Mr. Don Cameron. Introductions were made and a quorum was established. Members present at the meeting included Mr. Cameron, Dr. Nechodom, Mr. Tollstrup and Ms. Gretz. Subject matter expert, Dr. Parker, was also present while Ms. Kiger called into the meeting. CDFA Staff presented the minutes from the previous July 2, 2014, meeting. A motion was made to accept the minutes as presented by Ms. Gretz. The motion was moved by Mr. Tollstrup and the minutes were accepted without further changes.

SWEEP

An update was provided on the implementation of the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP). Presented information noted that CDFA had received a total of 130 applications totaling \$5.3 million. Since there was a total of \$10 million for the program, CDFA will be initiating a second solicitation. Agenda item 3 was focused on the 2nd solicitation. A complete update of how many of the 130 applications were funded would be provided at the next Science Panel meeting.

GEELA

CDFA Staff provided an update to the Science Panel on the Governor's Environmental, Education and Leadership Awards for 2014. The Science Panel assisted in establishing a new agriculture category for the 2014 award. GEELA had received one application for this award for the agriculture category. The members encouraged future investment of resources in outreach activities to facilitate the submission of more applications.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – AB 32 Scoping Plan

Mr. Tollstrup provided a brief overview of the AB 32 Scoping Plan and efforts to update the existing document. He noted the Science Panel might be able to assist in some of the Scoping Plan recommendations provided on page 61. Dr. Nechodom noted that the Agriculture Climate Action Team (Ag CAT) workgroup could be a useful resource. Members from the public (Ms. Merrill) noted it would be beneficial to include agricultural stakeholders as part of the Ag CAT. Mr. Cameron inquired if there was a special committee being formed to review the recommendations in the AB 32 Scoping Plan. Dr. Nechodom noted that there should be an effort to have a series of workshops where pieces of the AB 32 Scoping Plan can be vetted with stakeholders. Since the AB 32 Scoping Plan recommendation itself was not up for discussion, further discussion ensued on how the agriculture recommendation of the scoping plan could be implemented in consideration of the Science Panel. Dr. Gunasekara stated that CDFA Staff would evaluate the recommendations, determine appropriate committees or workgroups that could address specific recommendation including considering specific recommendations that Science Panel could engage on and bring the recommendations back as an agenda item at the next Science Panel meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 3. SWEEP

A presentation on the 2nd round solicitation for SWEEP applications was provided to the Science Panel by Ms. Cook. One of the key issues for discussion was the funding cap for each application; set at \$50,000 for first round. Based on comments from the Almond Board, CDFA staff proposed increased the funding cap to \$300,000 for each application. Members of the public (Ms. Merrill on behalf of CalCAN) stated that \$300,000 would not spread the funds around broadly among different farm sizes. Further, the higher dollar amount would only fund 30 additional projects. Mr. Cameron and other members supported the statement that a cap of \$300,000 was too high. Ms. Kiger suggested that \$150,000 is more reasonable than \$300,000 based on the requests made as part of the USDA NRCS Environmental Quality Incentive Program which do not usually exceed \$50,000. Other members of the Science Panel agreed that the \$300,000 funding cap was too high and eliminated the smaller size farms. The Science Panel determined from feedback from the public that \$150,000 would be a more appropriate award cap for the 2nd solicitation.

Another key issue was the availability of adequate tools for greenhouse gas calculations. CDFA noted that the program refers growers in the guidelines to external calculators. The Comet-Farm tool for estimating greenhouse gas reductions on farms was evaluated as a potential tool for growers. It was noted that no specialty crops had been included in Comet-Farm and that it could not be used for the SWEEP. The Science Panel suggested that CDFA seek funds to determine if specialty crops can be added to Comet-Farm so future programs can include it as a tool for growers. The Science Panel requested CDFA staff to design an effective tool that growers can use to determine potential greenhouse gas reductions.

Additional discussions on the 2nd solicitation ensued. CDFA staff noted that those who applied to the first SWEEP solicitation will be eligible to apply for the 2nd solicitation since CDFA did not have a sound reason to limit those in the first round applying for additional funds for additional water and greenhouse reductions. Additional water and greenhouse gases for the 2nd round for those who applied in the first round for SWEEP would come from expanding the existing project or engage in a new project on the farm. Also, if an application received funding under the 1st solicitation, that should be noted on their 2nd application.

A new funding criteria was added to the SWEEP 2nd solicitation to include other practices that might lead to water and greenhouse gas reductions. This was a request made by members of the public. The new language for this criteria was "any other management practice that reduces greenhouse gas levels and leads to water savings". CDFA staff noted that there might be slight changes to the language in the funding solicitation.

AGENDA ITEM 4. FUTURE DIRECTION

BIOCHAR

There was a discussion about evaluating biochar since several groups had recently met with Secretary Ross on this topic. The meetings called for recognizing the benefits of biochar and its potential use in California agriculture. Dr. Parker noted that it would be important to evaluate the economics of biochar. Dr. Gunasekara noted that it would be beneficial to have several speakers and experts at the next meeting to provide an overview of biochar including additional research needs. The Science Panel agreed to have a long discussion on biochar with feedback from researchers and industry leaders at the next meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 5 and 6. PUBLIC COMMENT AND NEXT MEETING

Public comment was taken throughout the meeting. The next meeting will take place in two to three months in Modesto or Sacramento.

Respectfully submitted by:



Amrith Gunasekara, Ph.D.



Date