

**MEETING OF THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (CDFA)
ENVIRONMENTAL FARMING ACT SCIENCE ADVISORY PANEL (EFA SAP)
(ALL MEETINGS OPEN TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC)**

Location: California Department of Food and
Agriculture
1220 N Street, Main Auditorium
Sacramento, CA 95814

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Item No.	MEETING MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 9, 2022
(1)	<p>CALL TO ORDER The meeting was called to order on Friday, September 9, 2022, at approximately 9:15 a.m., Chair Dr. Jeff Dlott presiding.</p>
(2)	<p>ROLL CALL Roll call taken by Josh Staab, Public Information Officer.</p>
	<p>Panel Members in Attendance Jeff Dlott, Ph.D., LandScan (Member and Chairperson) Keali'i Bright, California Department of Conservation (Member) Michelle Buffington, Ph.D., CalEPA California Air Resources Board (Member) (present via Zoom) Don Cameron, Terranova Ranch (Member) (present via Zoom) Scott Couch, CalEPA, State Water Resources Control Board (Member) Vicky Dawley, Tehama Resource Conservation District (Member) Leonard Diggs, Pie Ranch (Member) Amanda Hansen, California Natural Resources Agency (Member) Judith Redmond, Full Belly Farm (Member) Greg Norris, USDA NRCS (Subject Matter Expert)</p>
	<p><u>CDFA Staff in Attendance:</u> Virginia Jameson, Deputy Secretary of Climate and Working Lands Ravneet Behla, Ph.D., Senior Environmental Scientist Supervisor Nina Bingham, Ph.D., Environmental Scientist Sam Blacklock, Grant Coordination Manager Carolyn Cook, Senior Environmental Scientist Supervisor Joshua Staab, Public Information Officer I Scott Weeks, Senior Environmental Scientist, Specialist Michael Wolff, Ph.D., Senior Environmental Scientist, Specialist</p>

<p>(3)</p>	<p>APPROVAL OF MINUTES</p> <p>Chair Dlott made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 14, 2022, EFA SAP meeting. Member Couch seconded the motion and a vote of (9-0-0) carried the motion.</p>
<p>(4)</p>	<p>PRESENTATION: Below Ground Biodiversity Committee Update</p> <p>Speaker: Dr. Kate Scow, Distinguished Professor of Soil Science and Microbial Ecology at the University of California, Davis</p> <p>Dr. Scow provided an overview of the intersectionality of belowground soil biodiversity and ecosystem functions, indicators, metrics, and recommendations. The update included an overview of how belowground soil biodiversity drives agroecosystem functions, breaks down wastes, and supports plants and animals via mutualism, among other functions. Dr. Scow presented a draft report outline on Soil Biodiversity, including Ecosystem Services, Specific Indicators, potential metrics, recommendations for a CA Ag Soil Biodiversity Framework, and Related Indicators. The intent of the committee is to complete the report by February 2023.</p> <p>Dr. Scow discussed the establishment of listening sessions and subcommittees for the 30x30 liaisons. The committee is currently working on drafting frameworks, a 30x30 liaison subcommittee launch, a CDFA liaison subcommittee launch, and a committee meeting scheduled for Sept. 30, 2022.</p> <p>The panel members asked clarifying questions and discussed the potential to build on the report with future projects. They noted how the report is aligned with an can support parallel initiatives. Member Hansen mentioned potential partnerships for the future and pairing with organizations mutually invested, including efforts on the 5th Climate Assessment being led by the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research.</p> <p>Chair Dlott noted additional opportunities that could be undertaken by the below ground biodiversity committee, and how the panel and CDFA could provide guidance on expanding its inquiry. An example included soil biodiversity’s role in mitigating climate change and sequestering carbon.</p> <p>No public comments were offered on this item.</p>
<p>(5)</p>	<p>PRESENTATION: Update on Conservation Agriculture Planning Grants Program (CAPGP) and Pollinator Habitat Program (PHP)</p> <p>The Panel heard an update from CDFA Senior Environmental Scientist Carolyn Cook on the opening of the application periods for the Conservation Agriculture Planning Grants Program and Pollinator Habitat Program.</p> <p>Ms. Cook shared that both programs are currently accepting grant applications for the first time. CAPGP was appropriated \$17 million in 2021. Of that \$15 million is</p>

	<p>available grants to support the development of plans. The maximum award is \$250,000. PHP was appropriated \$15 M in 2021. The maximum award is \$2 million, of which 18% of the total award can be used for Technical Assistance and administrative tasks.</p> <p>Member Couch requested clarification about groundwater sustainable agency eligibility. Cook confirms and explains that the GSAs are eligible for CAPGP funding so they can support farmers with water irrigation planning.</p> <p>Member Redmond noted that the CAPGP has funding dedicated to organic transition plans and asked what kind of coordination will take place between the CDFA and the USDA related to organic transition and the opportunities available there. Those specifics are being discussed, Deputy Secretary Jameson said. The UC Organic Institute will work with CDFA to provide technical assistance related to Organic Transition.</p> <p>No public comments were offered on this item.</p>
<p>(6)</p>	<p>PRESENTATION: State Water Efficiency Enhancement Program Update</p> <p>The Panel heard a presentation from CDFA Senior Environmental Scientist Scott Weeks of the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEET).</p> <p>In response to questions from the April 2022 meeting, Mr. Weeks provided an overview of the outcomes of the 2021 SWEET application period. 593 projects were submitted from throughout the state. 410 were sent to administrative review, 337 were sent to technical review, and 283 projects were awarded. The program was oversubscribed by about double. \$43M was awarded. Mr. Weeks provided summaries on technical review and technical assistance providers. Mr. Weeks also shared information on the SWEET Pilot Program for the Southern Desert Region. The application for the pilot program would open in the first half of September with \$2 million available.</p> <p>Following the presentation, Member Dawley asked about the rolling application period and asked about the frustrations the process may create for applicants. Mr. Weeks noted there were comments received voicing frustration with the application process, though some positive feedback was also received. Member Dawley also wondered if there were other opportunities to roll out location-specific programs in other parts of California, like the Pilot for the Southern Desert region. Mr. Weeks discussed the specific challenges that are present in the Southern California Desert region, prompting the need for a focused program in the area.</p>

	<p>Member Bright asked about the most successful strategies for getting people into the program. Mr. Weeks noted the effectiveness of the technical assistance provided in the application process.</p> <p>Member Buffington asked how many projects are currently underway and how many are closed, and what published results and metrics are currently available. Mr. Weeks indicated that there are lists of projects and their status on the CDFA SWEEP webpage.</p> <p>Member Hansen asked about the level of funding solar energy. Mr. Weeks responded that he estimates that less than half the projects involve some implementation of solar energy, and that additional information can be gathered on this and reported back.</p> <p>Public comment was provided by Brian Shobe of CalCAN and Hannah Tikalsky of California Association of Resource Conservation Districts. Mr. Shobe asked about a summary of technical assistance providers and the types of needs applicants voiced or were faced with. Ms. Tikalsky noted that it was in applicants' interest to take advantage of the many technical assistance providers.</p> <p>No other public comments were received.</p>
(7)	<p>PRESENTATION: Healthy Soils Program Update</p> <p>CDFA Environmental Scientist Nina Bingham of the Healthy Soils Program (HSP) provided the panel with an update on the 2021 solicitation funding and duration, and sources.</p> <p>Dr. Bingham provided an overview of the solicitation window from November 1, 2021, through February 25, 2022, and presented an analysis regarding disqualification and resubmission of applications in the rolling process</p> <p>Member Redmond appreciated the analysis of the different submission rates for disadvantaged communities, low-income communities and socially disadvantaged farmer and ranchers (SDFR) submissions. Member Redmond asked for clarification on the communication between program providers, and grantees and how application resubmissions are handled. Member Redmond asked about patterns or common errors found in submissions. Dr. Bingham provided specifics related to those errors, including how applicants and CDFA could address specific application requirements to avoid disqualification and resubmission.</p> <p>The panel discussed the balance between striving to support SDFRs and other priority groups and the benefits of the first-come, first-served process. Member Cameron</p>

	<p>asked if a submission has minor flaws, could a timestamp be used to hold those applications a time-specific window to resubmit while not losing their spot “in line.”</p> <p>Member Hansen noted the effort to make best practices for technical assistance into standard practices by CDFA Secretary Ross and CNRA Secretary Crowfoot. Member Hansen noted another path available for applications not awarded funding in a current round may be through an opt-in registry process that is being built. The registry will be up and running by July 2023.</p> <p>Public Comment was given by Anna Larson</p> <p>No further public comments were received.</p>
(8)	BREAK
(9)	<p>PRESENTATION TO THE BOARD: Whole Orchard Recycling Practice Review</p> <p>The Panel heard from CDFA Senior Environmental Scientist Michael Wolff regarding Whole Orchard Recycling and modeling completed to support the practice in the Healthy Soils Program.</p> <p>Dr. Wolff provided an overview of the characteristics of whole orchard recycling, a practice involving removal of trees and chipping them in place. Services have evolved in recent years and adaptation is now in tens of thousands of acres. Currently, it is being used in almond and walnut orchards throughout California.</p> <p>Dr. Wolff noted the growing request from stakeholders that CDFA should support WOR even when annual cropping will follow the practice; this is currently not supported through HSP. To support this request Dr. Wolff used DNDC modeling to understand the potential emission and sequestration impacts of the of annual cropping scenario. Modeling shows that that carbon sequestration occurs in all the cases researched, showing a total GHG emission reduction. In DNDC simulations, corn planting after WOR shows substantial benefit to net GHGs.</p> <p>Member Diggs wondered what an organic farmer might expect from WOR versus other alternatives, and what other application study results could reveal. The panel had a general discussion regarding benefits of WOR, alternatives to WOR and the costs per acres.</p> <p>Member Norris requested clarification regarding annual crops and whether they could be included in WOR. Dr. Wolff indicated that the modeling exercise demonstrates that annual crops can be included.</p> <p>Member Cameron voiced his support for the WOR benefits from experience at his ranch.</p>

	<p>Public Comment was heard from Anna Larson who thanked the program for their efforts in the modeling exercise.</p> <p>No other public comments were received.</p>
(10)	<p>PANEL DISCUSSION: Block Grants</p> <p>The panel heard a presentation from CDFA Deputy Secretary for Climate and Working Lands Virginia Jameson and CDFA Grants Coordination Manager Sam Blacklock on Black Grant proposals for the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program and the Healthy Soils Program.</p> <p>Mr. Blacklock introduced the proposal for the Block Grant Pilot to the panel. Mr. Blacklock researched program caps and funding to determine what solutions were available to improve grant agreement processes. Mr. Blacklock is researching ways with which to ease the application process and navigate program requirements from one region to another, improve equity, and create a central entity where these processes can be accessed.</p> <p>Deputy Secretary Jameson provided an overview of potential eligible beneficiaries and potential requirements. Deputy Secretary Jameson also considered the potential evaluation criteria, qualifications, and partnerships, among others. The Deputy Secretary would like to see certain potential reporting requirements, too, noting ongoing communication, etc.</p> <p>Member Dawley requested there be clear standards be set forward for the proposal, voicing concern for potential large workloads for limited administrators.</p> <p>The panel continued this discussion in the next item – using the discussion and collaborative process</p>
(11)	<p>PANEL DISCUSSION: Visioning Session</p> <p>Dave Ceppos, Managing Senior Mediator at California State University, Sacramento State Consensus and Collaboration Program (CCP) led the panel through a discussion and exercise.</p> <p>Chair Dlott provided context for the need of the overview of the decision-making process. He mentioned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urgency is greater – climate and equity impacts • Significantly more resources are being dedicated • Lessons have and are being learned

- Opportunity to extend CDFA’s Climate Smart Ag National and International Leadership
- Equity of regional distribution (what defines equity when it comes to regional distribution?)

Mr. Ceppos gave a brief presentation regarding the collaborative decision-making process. Discussion items included:

- “Consensus” -- commonly used, interpreted differently and the challenges that can present.
- “Consensus with Accountability” -- requiring participants to reach unanimous consensus by achieving expressed interests, and their self-interests as well.
- Mr. Ceppos referenced the book “Getting to Yes” (Fisher and Ury)

In discussing the decision-making process utilized by the Panel, the members identified the need to have adequate meeting preparation and meeting materials before each panel meeting to have the most productive and efficient meetings. The panel discussed the importance of transparency in the decision-making process and the role of the panel as an advisory panel. Member Buffington proposed providing onboarding and background material prior to discussing proposals and synchronizing SAP meetings with the timing of legislative deadlines. Member Cameron also built on the proposal suggested by Member Buffington to include consideration of budget processes and suggested additional shorter, more frequent meetings to provide recommendations

Member Dawley voiced the need to consider how we provide transparency, according to the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act, into the decision-making process, including priorities set forth program by program. Member Couch echoed Member Dawley’s point, noting his experience with these types of decision-making processes within his department.

Member Diggs shared his experience as a relatively new member not necessarily seeing the larger strategy to the EFA SAPs meetings, but rather reacting to each meeting’s agenda. Member Bright suggested prioritizing the processes prior to the decision-making processes to improve time management.

Member Hansen wondered what rules were set by a bylaw mandating how the SAP collaborates and finds consensus. Hansen wondered if it was necessary to litigate a decision-making process. Mr. Ceppos noted the institutionalization of a decision-making method, by majority/minority consensus.

The Panel applied the concepts to a deeper discussion regarding the block grant framework of the previous agenda item.

	<p>Member Hansen considered the usefulness of coordination and knowledge sharing from one region of the state to the next. Member Hansen noted there is not a tool available to determine communities most in need of equitable distribution of resources. Who is in the greatest need of equitable distribution?</p> <p>Member Bright discusses his experience regarding the investments made in block granting but emphasized the need for partnership to accomplish goals that impact more than one organization and stakeholders. Mr. Ceppos considered through the investments made in collaboration, higher capacity, and increased resources can become available to meet local needs. Member Bright defined the significance of need dictating the equity of funding.</p> <p>Member Diggs raised a concern of training organizations to do a good job to distribute funds for a block grant, but if it's designed in such a way that doesn't work for the staff being served, it doesn't do an effective job.</p> <p>Mr. Ceppos recommended hearing from staff regarding the Block Grant framework. Ms. Cook noted the need to review government processes with grantees. Ms. Cook does see an opportunity to build stronger relationships with recipients through a block grant framework. Ms. Cook believes more follow-up after project completion could be beneficial. Dr. Behla supported Ms. Cook's position. Dr. Behla noted the drastic differences and marked improvements being made year over year to program processes, but he is open to trying new things and making stronger connections. Mr. Weeks supported these ideas, however, voiced his concerns related to building up the local resources and how those will vary region by region, and how those can change year over year.</p> <p>Ms. Dawley expressed the need for keeping information online and accessible there in an intuitive way.</p> <p>The Panel determined to meet again in October to further the discussion on the block grant proposal as an Action Item.</p>
(12)	<p>PUBLIC COMMENT</p> <p>Hannah Tikalsky offered public comment about the funding meeting the objectives of the project laid out by the department. Tikalsky offered partnership in the thought process.</p> <p>Anna Larson California Climate Network expressed support for a block grant approach to CDFA programs. Larson offered examples of successful block grant models within other California agencies. Larson encouraged ongoing public input and transparency for this process.</p> <p>No further public comments were received.</p>

(13)

CLOSING COMMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT

Next steps included scheduling of the Q4 EFA SAP for October.
Member Diggs proposed the Q4 EFA SAP be made via Zoom.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4 p.m.