

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)
Minutes

of the Meeting/Video Conferencing
of the Nursery Advisory Board (NAB)

Held on Tuesday, June 10, 2025
2710 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 210S, Room 2110
Sacramento, CA 95833

NURSERY ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Voting Members Present: David Cox, James Hessler, Dustin Hooper, Bruce Jensen, Jay Jensen, Phillip Johnson, David Kirby, Carl Pongs, Josh Puckett, Daniel Waterhouse

Voting Members Absent: Mike Doiron, Michael Frantz

Ex Officio Nonvoting Members Present: Kamal Bagri, John Keller, Loren Oki, Isabella Quinonez, Emily Robidart Rooney, Wolfgang Schweigkofler, Marcie Skelton, Gerry Spinelli

Ex Officio Nonvoting Members Absent: None

OTHER ATTENDEES*

Mihran Barseghyan, Kiana Dao, Jolene Desert, Tanya Goodson, Victoria Hornbaker, Joshua Kress, Brenda Lanini, Carolyn Lambert, Heater Martin, Keith Okasaki, Michael Paule, Kristina Weber

*As self-reported in the Zoom application

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

David Cox, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. and conducted roll call. A quorum was present for the Board.

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Cox welcomed everyone and reviewed the topics of discussion.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES

Cox directed the Board to review the draft minutes prepared by program staff for the December 5, 2024, and December 30, 2024 meetings. A copy of the draft minutes had been distributed to the Board members and posted on the Department's website prior to the meeting. Cox opened the floor for any changes or corrections. The Board reviewed the minutes, and no changes or corrections were made.

Board Motion #1

The Board approves the minutes from the December 5, 2024 meeting.

Motion: Jim Hessler

Second: Dan Waterhouse

Details of Board Vote

In Favor: David Cox, James Hessler, Dustin Hooper, Bruce Jensen, Jay Jensen,
Phillip Johnson, David Kirby, Josh Puckett, Daniel Waterhouse

Against: None

Abstain: Carl Pongs

Absent: Mike Doiron, Michael Frantz

Board Motion #2

The Board approves the minutes from the December 30, 2024 meeting.

Motion: Bruce Jensen

Second: David Kirby

Details of Board Vote

In Favor: David Cox, James Hessler, Dustin Hooper, Bruce Jensen, Jay Jensen,
Phillip Johnson, David Kirby, Josh Puckett, Daniel Waterhouse

Against: None

Abstain: Carl Pongs

Absent: Mike Doiron, Michael Frantz

ACP/HLB UPDATE

Keith Okasaki provided an update Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) and Huanglongbing (HLB). The HLB quarantine area covered 2,8116 sq. miles as of March 19, 2025. As of June 2, 2025, county HLB detection results showed 10,052 detections across 6 counties, including 903 HLB-positive psyllids:

- Los Angeles county: 2,001
- Orange county: 6,643
- Riverside county: 545
- San Bernardino county: 649
- San Diego county: 109
- Ventura county: 105

The Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Division (CPDPD) had developed a revised strategic plan due to a reduction in budget and staffing, which focused on the ag/urban interface near commercial citrus and de-prioritized response in ultra urban areas (with continued removal of HLB positive trees).

CPDPD staff, along with county agricultural commissioners' staff, have been working together to combat illicit nurseries which are illegally importing and/or propagating citrus.

Division staff worked with nurseries to revise the HLB Nursery Rule to allow citrus nursery stock to be maintained within a building before being sold at retail in Los Angeles and Orange Counties

Modifications to the HLB Nursery Rule in Los Angeles and Orange Counties were being discussed with the nursery industry in efforts to combat illicit nursery sales at the retail level.

STATE PHYTOPHTHORA PROGRAM UPDATE

Carolyn Lambert provided an update regarding the *Phytophthora ramorum* Program. There were 16 counties quarantined for *Phytophthora ramorum* (*P. ramorum*) in California, Del Norte County being the last county added to the list in 2022. At the time of the meeting, there were six *P. ramorum* positive nurseries in California (two retail nurseries and four production facilities). Over 5,000 plants had been destroyed at positive nurseries to date in 2025. The CDFA Plant Pest Diagnostics Center had processed 4,092 *P. ramorum* samples in 2025. A trace back inspection at a California nursery from a positive nursery in Oregon was negative.

The following items had been changed in the “USDA *Phytophthora ramorum* Domestic Regulatory Program Manual”:

- Increased number of samples required to be collected biannually at previously positive nurseries.
- Entire block destruction trigger (at discretion of the inspector) was added.
- Soil underneath a *P. ramorum* positive plant was now assumed to be positive and must be remediated if a nursery wants to place host material back in that area.

PESTS OF CONCERN IN CALIFORNIA

Heather Martin, Primary State Plant Pathologist, presented updates on Almond Red Leaf Blotch, Aloe Rust and Mango Malformation Disease (MMD)

Almond red leaf blotch, caused by *Polystigma amygdalinum*, is a fungal disease affecting *Prunus dulcis* (cultivated almond) and *P. webbii* (wild almond). It has since been confirmed in numerous almond-producing counties in California, including Fresno, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus, with new reports in Yolo, Kings, and Tulare counties as of spring 2025. With its B-rating, red leaf blotch requires strict nursery controls to prevent further spread, and CDFA was actively collecting samples from newly affected counties.

Aloe rust, caused by *Uromyces aloës*, is a microcyclic rust fungus affecting over 35 Aloe species, with some hosts in *Haworthia* and rare reports on *Agave*. It was first detected in California in 1978 and again in the early 1980s, leading to its A-rating. The most recent confirmed detection was in 2024 at a wholesale nursery in Monterey. The infected plants were traced to material imported from Zimbabwe or Guatemala. Out of nearly 200,000 plants, only 17 tested positive. After fungicide treatment and inspection, the facility was cleared, but additional tracing extended to San Diego

County. CDFA urged immediate reporting of any suspect cases. If found, samples should be secured and sent for confirmation, and all associated shipping and traceability documents should be preserved.

Mango malformation disease (MMD), caused by *Fusarium mangiferae*, was detected for the first time in California in August 2024 from a symptomatic mango (*Mangifera indica*) inflorescence in Los Angeles County. It primarily threatens mango-growing areas in Southern California and commercial production in Riverside County's Coachella Valley. The mango bud mite (*Aceria mangiferae*), associated with MMD elsewhere, had not been detected in California. The pathogen had a B-rating in California, and samples from nurseries, residences, or orchards should be submitted to CDFA for DNA-based confirmation. Proper sample collection includes the entire malformed inflorescence, not just symptomatic flowers.

Kyle Buecke, Primary State Entomologist, shared some pests of concern relevant to the California nursery industry including Strawberry blossom weevil, pests of Agave and spotted lanternfly.

Strawberry blossom weevil has been present on the west coast (British Columbia and Washington state) since 2019. It poses a threat to strawberry and cane berry in California. Natural spread via cultivated and wild hosts from its current distribution to California appears likely.

Agave cultivation in California for spirit production is a small but growing industry. There are agave pests not yet present in California that could be introduced to the state.

Spotted lanternfly remains a concern to the state of California. Some information regarding its appearance and life cycle and signs of spotted lanternfly infestation were presented.

STATE QUARANTINES UPDATE

Joshua Kress, Pest Exclusion Branch Chief, provided an update on quarantine activities.

Invasive fruit fly (IFF) quarantines:

- Oriental fruit fly (OFF) in Garden Grove had reached its third generation been declared eradicated.
- Mediterranean fruit fly (Medfly) quarantine in Fremont had not had a detection since January 27, 2025, and CDFA hoped to declare eradication by late August.
- All other 2024 IFF projects had been completed with no additional detections.
- There were nine IFF detections in 2025 to date, but none had triggered treatments or quarantines.

Spongy moth (SM):

- Delimitation projects were ongoing due to three detections in 2024. All egg mass surveys had been negative and there no treatments as of yet. The Department has not found an established population in California.

Japanese beetle:

- Ongoing delimitation and treatment project in Carmichael (Sacramento County).

COUNTY AGRICULTURAL COMMISSIONER'S UPDATE

CACASA Pest Prevention Committee – Kamal Bagri, San Joaquin County Agricultural Commissioner

Commissioner Bagri presented an update on the Comprehensive Pest Prevention Program Analysis (C3PA). She stated that the report was delayed and under CDFA management review. Another topic she discussed was regarding B-rated pest finds in the nurseries. B-rated pest finds are subject to enforcement actions by the local County Agricultural Commissioner. These actions could lead to quarantined shipments until the pest is mitigated, and destruction of plants infested with the B-rated pest.

CACASA Nursery, Seed, and Apiary Committee – Jolene Dessert, Imperial County Agricultural Commissioner

Commissioner Dessert introduced herself as new Chair of the Nursery, Seed, and Apiary Committee and reported that Marcie Skelton is now serving as Vice President of Agriculture for CACASA. She further relayed that the CACASA Board of Directors was actively discussing the Unclaimed Gas Tax funding future allocations as the 5-year plan had expired.

NURSERY LICENSING FEES

Kristina Weber updated the Board that regulations to increase fees are in progress as requested at prior NAB meeting.

After review of Food and Agricultural Code (FAC) section 6723, the Program discovered it had been incorrectly administering the statute and had not been collecting the required minimum licensing fee. The program planned to implement collection of this required fee starting January 1, 2026.

Weber discussed projected revenue increases due to the minimum licensing fee (\$150), and a potential increase in fees (minimum license fee and sales location fee) up to \$179.

Weber reviewed the acreage fee schedule currently in place, and noted the inequity of fees between small and large nurseries. Board Chair David Cox created a

committee to evaluate and recommend possible amendment of the acreage fee structure. Committee members included David Cox, Michael Frantz, David Kirby, Carl Pongs, and Dan Waterhouse.

Board Motion #3

The Board recommends that the Secretary increase the minimum licensing fee and the sales location fee each to \$179, in accordance with Food and Agricultural Code Section 6723.

Motion: David Kirby

Second: Carl Pongs

Details of Board Vote

In Favor: David Cox, James Hessler, Dustin Hooper, Bruce Jensen, Jay Jensen, Phillip Johnson, David Kirby, Carl Pongs, Josh Puckett, Daniel Waterhouse

Against: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Mike Doiron, Michael Frantz

UPCOMING AND CURRENT BOARD VACANCIES

Weber noted that Phillip Johnson's and Josh Puckett's terms were set to expire on January 31, 2026. A vacancy notice will be posted in the coming months.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

NEXT MEETING/AGENDA ITEMS

The next Board meeting was planned for Fall 2025, to be held in-person and virtually.

A Doodle Poll will go out this week to the Acreage Fee Committee to set a meeting date.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:31 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Michael Paule, Associate Governmental Program Analyst

Nursery Services Program

California Department of Food & Agriculture