



## Farm Bureau at work

California Farm Bureau's government affairs team is at the Capitol, advocating for farmers, ranchers and agriculture's future. Here are some key issues Farm Bureau is focused on this week.

October 14, 2022

### Announcements

**CDFA ANNOUNCES AWARDS FOR \$5 MILLION FOR THE BEGINNING FARMER AND FARMWORKER TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROGRAM (BFFTP)** The California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) Office of Farm Equity announces that it is awarding \$5 million in grants for projects throughout the state through the 2022 Beginning Farmer and Farmworker Training and Workforce Development Grant Program (BFFTP). An additional \$5 million will be made available in a second solicitation in 2023. The funding for this grant program was made possible through the 2021-2022 California general fund budget.

This program provides support to organizations to enhance or expand beginning farmer and farmworker training/apprenticeship programs. The overall goal of the program is to ensure that resources are dedicated to strengthening support for socially disadvantaged and/or beginning farmers and ranchers in the first ten years of business, and for farmworkers who can improve job security with additional skills training. A secondary goal of the program is to build and grow regional networks to ensure organizations can provide adequate support and training opportunities for those most underserved in the agriculture industry.

"We need new farmers and ranchers in California, and this program is a crucial step in cultivating the next generation of talent in agriculture," said CDFA Secretary Karen Ross. "There is a place for all who have the desire to farm or to improve their skills to become farm managers, and this program will help us focus support to grow opportunities in agriculture. The complete list of grant awardees and summaries of their projects can be found at: <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/bfftp> Eligible applicants could apply for two types of awards in this program: program planning and curriculum development grants of up to \$100,000, or program implementation grants up to \$1,000,000 for both beginning farmer training, and farmworker training or workforce development programs.

The following entities were eligible to apply for this program: Non-profit organizations, Tribal Governments and Community colleges. Community colleges were eligible as co-applicants with local partner organizations. Entities receiving funding demonstrated expertise in assisting socially disadvantaged, small-scale farmers, and farmworkers in workforce development programs. Note -- 33 percent of California farms are on nine acres or less and 43 percent of farms have less than \$10,000 in sales. Women are primary producers on 32 percent of our farms; only eight percent of California farms are owned by non-white producers according to race; and about 10 percent of farmers are military veterans.

### CDFA

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) held a public listening session on Monday to accept farmer, rancher, and stakeholder feedback on a new block grant framework to third-party

organizations for the Healthy Soils Program (HSP) and the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP). The Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation (OEFI) is exploring a block grant pilot program, rather than the current process of direct applications to CDFA, which the Department believes will allow flexibility, technical assistance, and capacity building at the regional level.

California Farm Bureau has concerns with this new approach. Instead of funds going to directly to farmers and ranchers to implement these important HSP and SWEEP practices, a large percentage of funds, including up to 25% in indirect expenses, will be funneled through non-profits and will incur third-party administration costs which will result in significantly less funds for HSP and SWEEP projects, and less money for farmers and ranchers who want to help achieve these climate smart practices. Many Farm Bureau members participated in the listening session on Monday and testified on their first-hand experiences with these programs, and their success in implementing them. Moving forward, OEFI will make the presentation to the Environmental Farming Act Science Advisory Panel ([EFA SAP](#)) on Thursday, October 20. If you would like to participate, please register [here](#). There will be a public comment period in which you can share your comments on this pilot proposal. If the EFA SAP moves forward with this proposal, a public comment period will open in which CFBF can submit formal written comments. *Staff: Katie Little, [klittle@cfbf.com](mailto:klittle@cfbf.com)*

## CEQA, Wildfire, and Land Use

Attorney General Bonta issued guidance this week to assist local governments on best practices and mitigation measures to address the threat of wildfire and comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The guidance applies statewide, but is intended primarily for the wildland – urban interface. Attorney General Bonta has intervened in rural land use decisions, recently, when his office joined with environmental groups in opposing the Guenoc Valley housing project in Lake County. Based on a challenge to the developer's CEQA documents, a Lake County judge decided that the lead agency and developer had not considered the risks from wildfire and found the CEQA documents insufficient, effectively killing the project. The Attorney General's office states that the Guidelines are intended to help local agencies comply with CEQA when analyzing and mitigating a proposed project's impact on wildfire ignition risk, emergency access, and evacuation. The guidance is unrelated to state and local agency fire management activities, such as prescribed burns, approval of vegetation management plans to reduce wildfire risk, or review of timber harvest plans. The guidance addresses topics such as:

- **Project Density:** Project density influences how likely a fire is to start or spread, and how likely it is that the development and its occupants will be in danger when a fire starts. Local governments should strive to increase housing density and consolidate design, relying on higher density infill developments as much as possible.
- **Project Location:** Project placement in the landscape relative to fire history, topography, and wind patterns also influences wildfire risk. Local governments should limit development along steep slopes and amidst rugged terrain to decrease exposure to rapid fire spread and increase accessibility for fire-fighting.
- **Water Supply and Infrastructure:** As part of evaluating a project's wildfire risk impacts, local governments should analyze the adequacy of water supplies and infrastructure to address fire-fighting within the project site. Local governments should consider requiring on-site water supply or storage to augment ordinary supplies that may be lost during a wildfire.
- **Evacuation and Emergency Access:** Evacuation modeling and analysis should be completed prior to the development's approval and include evaluation of the capacity of surrounding roadways, project

impacts on existing evacuation plans, and proximity to existing fire services, among other factors. Local governments should consider placing developments close to existing road and evacuation infrastructure, and where appropriate, constructing additional roads to facilitate evacuations.

- **Fire Hardening Structures and Homes:** Home hardening has been shown to be an extremely effective measure for preventing structure loss during a wildfire. Local governments should require developers to upgrade building materials and use installation techniques to increase the development's resistance to heat, flames, and embers beyond what is required in applicable building codes.

The guidance suggests that any complying environmental impact report (EIR) include fire modeling and other spatial and statistical analyses to quantify risks. Fire models should account for project siting and design, differing fire scenarios, for fires that start in, near, and far from the project site, and extreme weather conditions that could impact fire speed. You can read the Attorney General's guidance [here](#).

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## Wildlife

This week, the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) heard arguments on the possible listing of the Western Joshua Tree (WJT). As Farm Bureau at Work readers might recall, the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) released its status review report in April on the WJT. The report concluded that the petitioned action to list WJT as threatened under CESA is not warranted at this time. According to the Department's report, "The recent demographic trend information available to the Department suggests that density or extent of some populations may decline by the end of the 21st century (2100), but due to continuing recruitment, high abundance, widespread distribution, and the longevity of the species, the available demographic data does not currently suggest that Western Joshua Tree is likely to be at risk of disappearing from a significant portion of its range during this timeframe." CBBF, joined a coalition in June to support the recommendation by the Department that the recommended action to list the WJT as threatened is *not warranted* and urged the Commission to deny the petition.

After hours of testimony at the June hearing, the Commission was split on the vote to list the WJT (2-2). Commissioners Sklar and Hostler-Carmesin voted to deny the petition to list the WJT at this time, and asked to push the decision out until later this year in efforts to gather more information on the subject. Commissioners Murray and Zavaleta, however, voted to list the species immediately. Since the vote was split, the Commissioners voted unanimously to postpone the decision until the October meeting and asked for Tribal engagement as well as further input from the Department on recovery plans and possible legislative action. After this previous postponement, Wednesday's meeting still had no definitive outcome. After opening comment for Tribal entities, the Commission voted to continue the discussion until next February. They are hoping that the postponement will allow the commission to review the petition fully. This includes updating Commissioner Anthony Williams who joined the Commission for his first meeting after his recent appointment earlier this month. Additionally, Commissioner Sklar will not be at the December meeting, so the February meeting will be the next opportunity for all Commissioners to participate and ultimately vote on the matter.

Farm bureau will remain engaged on this issue, in the meantime, the WJT shares CESA protections until the decision is finalized. For more information, visit the Fish and Game Commission website. Staff: Katie Little, [klittle@cbbf.com](mailto:klittle@cbbf.com)