ALLIANCE OF PEST CONTROL DISTRICTS
22847 Road 140, Tulare, California

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2025

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE at 22847 Road 140, Tulare (APCD office):

Commissioners: John N. Fisher IV and John Corkins *(Kern County Citrus PCD – KCCPCD)*
Jim Zimmerman and Steve Scarbrough *(Southern Tulare County Citrus PCD – STCCPCD)*
Jay Gillette and James McKinney *(Central Valley PCD – CVPCD)*

Staff: Dr. Subhas Hajeri, Managing Director; Mia Neunzig, Administrative Manager; Dr. Saurabh Gautam, Field Manager/Entomologist; Dr. Dhiraj Gautam, Lab Manager/Safety Officer; Ron Carter, Field Supervisor; Hailey Jones, Administrative Assistant; and Kevin Howerton, Database Administrator

Other: Judy Zaninovich, APCD Grower Liaison; Libby Ouellette, Fresno County Deputy Ag Commissioner/Sealer; Sam Conant, Tulare County Deputy Ag Commissioner/Sealer; and Sam Lok, Pinnacle Technology

ATTENDANCE VIA ZOOM:

Commissioners: Milo Gorden and Jeff Steen *(Tulare County PCD – TCPCD)*

Other: Jessica Leslie, APCD Grower Liaison; Dr. Sandipa Gautam, UC IPM Cooperative Extension; and Richard Chen, Barn Owl Technologies

Absent Commissioners: None.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Fisher IV called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

All in attendance identified themselves.

OPEN SESSION:

Public Comments: None.

Introduction of New Database Administrator:

Managing Director Dr. Subhas Hajeri introduced Kevin Howerton as the Agency's new Database Administrator.

Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting, June 18, 2025

It was moved by Commissioner Gillette, seconded by Commissioner Scarbrough, to accept the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on June 18, 2025, as presented. The motion carried on a roll call vote, with all commissioners present voting AYE, except Commissioner Corkins, who abstained due to not attending the June 18 meeting.

Departmental Operations:

Field and lab activities: June and July 2025

Field Supervisor Ron Carter reported that, as of August 19, 2025, for summer trapping, a total of 1,978 site visits had been conducted and 1,970 traps had been brought in for screening. Carter noted an ACP detection in the Lemon Cove area, near a packing house, prompted visual surveys of the surrounding areas and

inspections of traps, with no further detections. New trap sites added near Castaic and at the northbound I-5 rest stop confirmed ACP detection. It remains unclear whether the trap find should be considered a "hitchhiker" or an indication of a localized infestation in the area.

Entomologist, Dr. Saurabh Gautam discussed DNA-based and AI-based trap screening methods, with a revised USDA proposal pending and a CDFA Block Grant proposal in preparation. Gautam moved on to discuss the protocol for testing ACP for CLas after it had been found on a trap. He stated APCD had been successful in detecting CLas in ACP collected from Southern California. Gautam then discussed an ongoing study on CLas detection in different tree tissues (including leaves, fruit pedicels, bark phloem punches, and roots) from confirmed CLas-positive trees for PCR testing. The goal is to establish a program capable of detecting CLas in trees before they become infectious. He also expressed interest in developing a bulk sampling protocol that would allow pooled samples from at least ten trees to be tested together.

Commissioner John Corkins asked whether research had been published on how the bacteria move through the tree and whether they travel through the symplastic or apoplastic portions of the plant. Gautam responded that the movement of bacteria throughout the tree remains unclear. Discussion ensued on this topic.

Gautam went on to describe collaborative work with Dr. Ray Yokomi of the USDA on research related to Citrus Yellow Vein Clearing Virus (CYVCV) in Tulare County. The research involves visiting infected trees, collecting all possible insects present, and testing them in the lab to determine which insect carries the virus.

AI Trap Reader Project

Richard Chen from Barn Owl Technologies presented an AI-based trap imaging system, but the Board requested more details before proceeding.

APCD Grower Liaisons

Judy Zaninovich reported on the fall Vector Treatment Program and raised concerns about an "unofficial" ACP detection in Arvin, proposing an MOU to align APCD and CDFA trap protocols.

Administrative Activities

Tulare County Assessors Meeting Update

On August 8, 2025, Administrative Manager Mia Neunzig reported that a meeting was held with the Tulare County Assessor's Office, where the Assessor's Office team demonstrated a collaborative attitude. Dr. Hajeri added that Kevin Howerton is analyzing to compare APN acreage. Hajeri concluded that once this process is refined, similar collaborations should be initiated with Kern and Fresno counties.

CPDPC Executive Meeting Update

Dr. Hajeri reported on the CPDPC Executive Committee Meeting held August 12, 2025. He stated the purpose of the meeting was to present both APCD's and CDFA's individual budgets for trapping and Multi-Pest Inspection (MPI) activities and to evaluate how much of APCD's work aligned with CDFA's budgeted activities to reduce grower costs and minimize duplication of efforts.

Commissioner Gillette inquired about the per-sample cost of PCR testing. Dr. Hajeri explained that the cost is currently high due to the low number of samples processed in the lab. He noted that increasing lab utilization would reduce the per-unit cost of testing. Dr. Hajeri reported that APCD has the capacity to test 80,000–100,000 samples annually; however, the lab was currently processing only about 6,500 samples per year.

Commissioner Gillette noted that discrepancies in CDFA's trap servicing projections were due to seasonal GWSS program overlaps. Judy Zaninovich confirmed that the GWSS program operated seasonally, with traps placed at the beginning of April and removed by early October. She reported a significant reduction in trap sites compared to previous seasons and explained that GWSS traps in citrus were limited to areas within half a mile of grape plantings.

Ron Carter reported seeing GWSS traps deployed in citrus well beyond the half-mile boundary from grapes. Zaninovich acknowledged that this remained an ongoing issue. APCD Grower Liaison Jessica Leslie added that she would be attending a meeting the following day with representatives from Fresno County, CDFA, and

USDA to discuss the GWSS program, and she would seek clarification on why traps continued to be deployed outside the updated zones.

Commissioner Jeff Steen raised a budget question about the CDFA budget presented at the most recent CPDPC Executive Committee meeting, prompting further discussion.

APCD Performance to Budget for FY 2024-2025

Neunzig reviewed the report and noted that everything appeared to be in line with the county.

Income and Expenses: June and July 2025

Neunzig reviewed the report. Commissioner Steve Scarbrough noted the rise in property insurance costs, and Neunzig acknowledged that there had been a higher-than-normal increase this year.

Review and Ratify Warrant List: June and July 2025

Neunzig reviewed the report.

It was moved by Commissioner Corkins, seconded by Commissioner Gillette, to approve the Warrant List for June and July 2025, as presented. The motion carried on a roll call vote, with all in attendance voting AYE.

Capital Expenditures: None.

Reports:

Ag Commissioner Updates

Fresno County Deputy Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer Libby Ouellette reported that 731 bulk citrus load inspections had been completed, achieving a compliance rate of over 96%. Significant issues accounted for only about 0.5% of inspections, with most Notices of Violation (NOVs) issued for paperwork errors. In total, there were 10 cases involving tarp issues (tears or improper application), 4 cases with no tarp, and 6 compliance agreement violations. Ouellette noted that the program's budget had been reduced to $100,000, resulting in several staff layoffs to meet the new funding level. CDFA also set a cap on the funds available to support ACP trapping in the area. As a result, Ouellette downsized from four ACP trappers to three, with CDFA expected to cover any resulting service gaps. She added that there had been no ACP detections since April 2024. In general detection trapping, one sterile Mediterranean fruit fly was caught. Detection dogs also alerted to multiple shipments of illegal fruit intercepted through UPS, one originating from Florida and another from the Caribbean, which contained Caribbean fruit fly. The packages appeared to come from the same shipper, but tracing efforts were unsuccessful due to the use of false names and addresses. The information was forwarded to CDFA and USDA for further investigation.

Tulare County Deputy Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer Sam Conant provided an update on the ACP detection in Lemon Cove. Upon initial detection, CDFA was promptly notified and provided with all relevant information, including details on affected growers within a ½-mile radius of the site. All growers within that area had completed treatments on their properties. CDFA also conducted a visual survey, and no additional detections were found. Following the 2024 detection, the county revoked the packinghouse's authorization to receive grate-cleaned fruit. It is believed that ACP may have been introduced through wet-washed fruit received from Riverside County or spray-and-harvest fruit from Ventura County. The delimitation zone established from the 2024 detection was still active at the time of the 2025 detection, which reset the timeline for another 12 months. No additional ACP had been detected since.

Conant noted that bulk citrus inspections were ongoing but had slowed during this period as staff were redirected to GWSS residential treatments. Approximately 1,800 transporter inspections and 80 records inspections were conducted, with a violation rate of about 3%, most of which were minor. He also reported that Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer Tom Tucker continued overseeing abatement properties, with 214 acres across eight properties currently active and in the process of being addressed.

CDFA Updates

None.

UC IPM Report

Area Citrus IPM Advisor Dr. Sandipa Gautam joined the meeting via Zoom. Dr. Gautam mentioned that she had recently distributed an email containing a survey to encourage grower participation and to assess awareness of current research tools being developed nationwide. She noted that ACP traps had been deployed in every block at the Lindcove Research Center and were being serviced biweekly, with no detections to date. Dr. Gautam also announced several upcoming meetings and workshops scheduled for the near future.

CCM Updates

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Fisher IV adjourned the meeting at 2:38 p.m.

John N. Fisher IV, Chairman

Mia Neunzig, Recording Secretary/Admin. Manager