**Natural and Working Lands Technical Advisory Committee**

September 22, 2023 | 12:30 PM – 2:00 PM

Center for Land-Based Learning

40140 Best Ranch Rd, Woodland, CA, 95776

Join via Zoom: <https://yolocounty.zoom.us/j/83861052404>

NWL TAC Members

**Pelayo Alvarez,** Climate Action Commission (YCCAC) Member, Audobon Conservation Ranching Program *(not in attendance)*

**Mica Bennett,** YCCAC Member

**Humberto Izquierdo,** Yolo County Department of Agriculture

**Andrew Truman Kim,** YCCAC Member

**Sarah Morgan,** YCCAC Ex-Officio Member, Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation *(not in attendance)*

**Neil Muller,** M Three Ranches

**Heather Nichols,** Yolo County Resource Conservation District

**Kate Reza,** Yolo County Resource Conservation District

**Denise Sagara,** Yolo County Farm Bureau

**Adrian Solis,** RISE Inc. *(not in attendance)*

**Scott Stone,** Yolo Land & Cattle Co. *(not in attendance)*

**Eric Willson,** Rominger Brothers Farms

Staff Members

**Gretchen James,** Yolo County Associate Administrative Services Analyst

**Yuridiana Pantoja,** CivicSpark Fellow

**Tess Vaccaro,** CivicSpark Fellow

**Kristen Wraithwall,** Yolo County Sustainability Manager

**AGENDA**

1. **Staff Updates:**
   1. *Receive Update on 1:1 Grower Interviews* (*Attachment A*)
      1. It was shared that there have been nine interviews so far.
      2. A question was asked how the climate change concern question is scaled.
         1. A response was made that ‘1’ is low concern regarding climate change, while ‘5’ is high concern regarding climate change.
      3. It was asked whether interviewees are primarily farmers that have already worked with RCD and what percentage of farmers in the county RCD has worked with.
         1. A response was made that interviewees so far are primarily farmers that have already worked with RCD. She estimated that RCD has worked with less than 25% of farmers in the county.
      4. It was shared that the ag survey can be distributed at the next Farm Bureau Board meeting.
   2. *Receive Update on Survey Distribution and Outreach*
      1. It was shared that 1,508 surveys have been distributed via email, for partners to send out to their mailing list. It was added that there have been nine interviews so far.
      2. It was shared that there have been 17 electronic surveys submitted. It was added that the survey can be extended to the end of October.
   3. *Discuss Coordination with Equity & Engagement TAC re: farmworker engagement*
      1. *Tabled for next TAC meeting*
2. **Discuss the Natural Lands Component of CAAP (*Attachment B*)**
   1. A comment was made that Attachment B references four questions asked of the NWL TAC to discuss. A list of preliminary responses were provided to the group.
   2. A question was asked regarding whether there are any restoration plans already being proposed at mining locations.
   3. It was shared that Capay Valley has cut down many trees along road widening projects. It was suggested to keep big trees that line field margins and roads to maintain carbon storages.
      1. It was shared that tree ordinances can help preserve these big trees. It was added that RCD works with voluntary landowners.
      2. It was added that tree trimming to make space for large agricultural equipment has been a recent topic of discussion and coordination with Public Works.
   4. A comment was made that priority for the TAC thus far has centered around agricultural lands.
   5. It was shared that existing funding structures often already prioritize land areas to maximize benefits.
   6. It was shared that RCD does restoration and maintenance of existing projects, notably in wetlands. It was added that a map of these projects can be shared.
      1. It was shared that good, replicable examples of existing projects would be useful to share.
   7. A comment was made that a conversation with other groups such as the Natural Resources Department and Habitat Conservancy could be useful to get a better sense of existing projects within the County.
   8. A comment was made that strategies for finding funding is a critical component of developing measures. It was suggested to consider meaningful incentives as a strategy.
      1. A response was made that State grant programs are often used as incentives, though there are many groups that apply for these grants.
      2. It was shared that State and Federal opportunities are coming up. It was mentioned that there is a Federal grant opportunity due in April for funding projects that are out of a CAAP.
   9. It was asked whether current funding challenges are primarily the amount of funding available, the complications of finding funding, or the accessibility of receiving funding.
      1. A response was made that people would like to see the long-term plan of the County. It was added that many operations have adopted sustainable farming practices already, such as no-till farming. It was added that many farmers will adopt new practices if they can see success stories from other operations.
      2. It was added that land type and operation type are important factors in determining the feasibility of strategy adoption.
   10. A question was asked about how many acres we are aiming to implement projects on.
       1. A question was asked about how the group plans to quantify what needs to be done and on what/how much acreage of land to meet our climate goals.
   11. A question asked if it is feasible to set a goal of adopting carbon strategies on every farm in the county.
       1. A response was made that there are current efforts to educate the farming community about different strategies, though this is a long process. It was also shared that NRCS has calculation tools to see benefits of specific strategies on acreage amounts.
       2. It was added that having a plan tailored to specific farming sites would be extremely beneficial to farmers.
       3. It was shared that NRCS tools are customizable based on crop type, and acreage, though this is also time consuming.
       4. It was added that collecting information on what farmers need to adopt strategies to reduce carbon and what can be done on each operation
       5. A comment was made that a simple project for each household residence in the County could be an effective and simple way to reduce carbon on smaller pieces of property (I.e. a compost bin).
   12. The TAC was asked to provide comments on these items to the Sustainability Team by next Friday.
   13. It was shared that it would be helpful to have a conversation on how acreage is determined.
   14. A question was asked about whether managed land that isn’t used for agricultural purposes, such as turf fields, would be considered natural lands.
       1. A response was made that it could be categorized as urban land or its own category. It was shared that Staff can follow up on how this land is categorized.
       2. It was added that government managed public lands, such as schools, medians, fronts of city hall, are being asked to reduce pesticide usage.
       3. It was added that jurisdictions often have policies to reduce or disallow herbicide usage in parks. It was added that the County does not currently have a policy for this. It was added that these restrictions can pose challenges for land maintenance.
       4. It was added that blanket land management policies are often restrictive.
   15. A comment was made that large-scale agricultural companies drilling deeper wells in heavily impacted areas has been brought up as a concern.
       1. It was shared that the Groundwater Sustainability Agency is managing these concerns.
       2. It was shared that the County is considered in a sustainable state in terms of groundwater, though rural residential areas and small-farming operations could be improved. This is a topic currently under discussion.
       3. It was shared that the Board of Supervisors approved a temporary stay for areas of special concern.
       4. It was added that there are 5 determined areas of special concern that the County is focusing on. The County is working on how to define these areas.
3. **Provide Feedback on the Proposed Natural and Working Lands Strategy Framework (*Attachment C*)**
   1. It was shared that the overall CAAP strategies framework can provide additional context to the framework provided for the Natural and Working Lands component.
   2. It was shared that Dudek created a framework for how strategies for the CAAP will be outlined. It was added that sequestration and emissions reductions strategies/measures/actions were highlighted in a separate memo. A lot of priorities will be determined through surveys and coordination with RCD and the NWL TAC.
   3. It was added that the two main strategies (1. Encourage Sustainable Agriculture and 2. Sequester and Store Carbon in Natural and Working Lands) serve as organizational categories for specific measures to fall within, such as the suggested addition of “Protect Natural and Working Lands from conversion”.
   4. It was shared that the entire CAAP will have nine stand-alone strategies, with two dedicated to natural and working lands.
   5. It was added that protection from conversion should be prioritized for both natural and working lands.
   6. A comment was made that some of the percentages in the memo (56% working lands, 37% natural lands) seem inaccurate based on past data.
      1. It was shared that overlapping data received was within agricultural lands. The data used for this memo came directly from Yolo.
      2. A comment was made that the percentage of working lands in the county does seem low.
      3. It was shared that the percentage of land use does impact sequestration potential. It was added that an additional conversation with the county’s GIS team could be useful to ensure that these categories are accurate. It was added that it’s possible that ranching land was not included in working lands.
      4. It shared that a conversation with RCD, Humberto, and the GIS team can be scheduled to ensure land coverage is accurate.
   7. It was shared that next month the group will be able to discuss specific strategies within the categories outlined by this memo.
   8. It was shared that regulations, labor, and technology were often expressed as barrier concerns during the grower interviews.
   9. It was shared that a more in depth presentation on the framework will be made at the September 25th Commission meeting. It was added that there is a priority for programs that already have funding and implementation structure. There is a three-phase structure for how to prioritize and time the implementation of strategies that will be guided by knowledge of existing barriers, programs, and State guidance. It was added that the context of how all strategies for the CAAP will be framed is helpful to understanding how strategies for natural and working lands will be framed.
   10. A question was asked if TAC members can provide comments to this memo after the meeting.
       1. A response was made that the TAC is welcome to review and add comments to this memo before an updated version is presented to the Commission in October.
   11. A question was asked about where drought-resistant farming practices would fall within these two categories.
       1. A response was made that there are some strategies that may fall under multiple buckets, such as drip irrigation falling under both adaptation and sustainable agriculture. It was shared that categorizing measures will ultimately fall into which category the measure most aligns with. Effective use of water is still under discussion for which umbrella it best falls under.
       2. It was shared that defining feasibility
   12. A commenter mentioned existing, locally specific plans related to natural and working lands strategies. A comment was made that they can be shared with Dudek to prevent creating a new list from scratch. The Yolo Habitat Conservancy website lists and links out existing plans.
       1. A question was asked if these include plans for both natural and working lands.
       2. A response was made that the existing plans cover habitat projects for both natural and working lands.
       3. It was added that the County’s General Plan will bridge policies across different components.
4. **Monarch Tractor Partnership Opportunity (*Attachments D and E*)**
   1. It was shared that there is a partnership opportunity with Monarch Tractor. Monarch Tractor is looking for a farmer to receive five small autonomous electric tractors for farming operations.