

California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force

Virtual Goal 1: *Tribal Stewardship and Land Return*

Subcommittee Meeting Summary: Sept. 16, 2025

DRAFT until approved at subsequent meeting.

Meeting Called to Order

Facilitator Wylie opened the meeting at 10:04 a.m.

Welcome and Housekeeping

Facilitator Wylie provided housekeeping information for all meeting participants. Slides and materials presented during the meeting are available on the California Strategic Growth Council ([SGC website](#)).

Roll Call

Roll call was conducted by the facilitator. Members present:

- Vice Chair Emily Burgueno
- Lawrence Harlan

Members absent:

- None

Quorum was established.

Staff present:

- Camille Frazier, SGC
- Tessa Salzman, SGC
- Caleb Swanson, SGC
- Meagan Wylie, California State University, Sacramento

Working Session

Staff reviewed changes to Goal 1: *Tribal Stewardship and Land Return* recommendations since the August Task Force meeting, including significant edits to the overview section. Members were encouraged to provide detailed feedback in writing or at future meetings.

Staff also noted progress on:

- Inclusion of the Golden Eagle Case Study in the October draft.
- Development of a list of federally recognized Tribal Nations in California, including the Modoc Nation of Oklahoma, with total acreage and landholding data.
- Inclusion of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) tract data for land holdings of Tribal Nations.

Tribal Membership Data

Members and staff briefly discussed the feasibility and risks of including Tribal membership data in the Report. Concerns were raised about data accuracy, reliance on census information, and the importance of Tribal consent. Members requested staff follow up with Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) sources, if possible, and clarify data limitations within the report narrative.

Recommendation 1.1 – Tribal Land Return Commission

Subcommittee members discussed whether the proposed Tribal Land Return Commission is the appropriate mechanism to oversee land return. Members raised questions about its role, oversight, and potential for intertribal conflict given its proposed structure as an elected body with regional representation.

Members emphasized that broad Tribal consultation is essential to determine whether the Commission is needed, how it should be structured, and who should oversee it.

Suggestions included:

- Conduct multi-phased outreach with Tribal Nations, including engagement sessions and opportunities to review a draft proposal.
- Embed a consultation process to ensure all Tribal Nations can participate.
- Clarify whether oversight should come from Tribal leadership, a state entity, or regional organizations.

Staff will revise the language to emphasize consultation and co-development of the Commission concept with Tribal Nations before bringing it back to the Subcommittee.

Permanent Advisory Council

Public feedback suggested creating a permanent Tribal Land Equity Advisory Council to guide implementation and accountability. Members supported the idea but recommended housing the Council under the SGC rather than the proposed Commission. Staff will draft revised language accordingly.

Right of First Refusal

Subcommittee members discussed the scope and structure of a right of first refusal (RFR) process. Staff noted the concept appears in both Goal 1 and Goal 3.3 and is still under legal review. Members emphasized the need for clarity and consistency while avoiding redundancy across the report. Key points included:

- Applicability: Members agreed RFR should apply to both public and private lands, including pristine and coastal parcels, not only “disposable” or surplus lands. Staff clarified intent to focus on agricultural lands, though members suggested broadening to include ancestral and non-agricultural state-owned lands.
- Sequence of offers: Members emphasized that Tribal Nations should be offered lands first. After Tribal Nations, other priority producers and land stewards could be considered. Staff noted some input suggesting farmworkers be prioritized, though members expressed caution to ensure the process does not inadvertently set groups in opposition to each other.
- Jurisdictional issues: Questions arose regarding how the state can mandate RFR for private land sales and whether county and city lands should be included. Members highlighted the need to clarify definitions (e.g., clarification of what qualifies as “public land” and whether county/city-owned parcels should be included) and recognize jurisdictional limits. Staff will coordinate with Goal 3.3 language to better address local government roles.
- Language refinement: Members encouraged staff to refine language around preemptive rights, oversight authority, and the distinction between agricultural and ancestral lands.

Staff will redraft Goal 1 language to reflect these clarifications and alignment with Goal 3.3.

Next Steps

- The Subcommittee will pivot to a two-member working group and meet again in the coming week to continue discussions, including:
 - Goal 1.1a: Transfer of ancestral lands free from restrictions or encumbrances.
 - Potential terminology shifts (e.g., “California Native American Tribes” instead of “Tribal Nations”) and defining traditional Tribal uses.
- Staff will integrate revisions and bring updated Goal 1 language back to members.

Public Comment:

None.

General Public Comment:

None.

Facilitator Wylie summarized action items and next steps and highlighted upcoming meetings.

Staff will work to schedule a follow-up meeting in the coming week.

The meeting adjourned at 11 a.m.