

California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force Virtual Goal 2: *Protected and Thriving Agricultural Lands* Subcommittee Meeting Summary: Sept.19, 2025

Meeting Called to Order

Facilitator Wylie opened the meeting at 9 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:

- Nathaniel Brown
- Dorian Payán
- Thea Rittenhouse (*arrived at 9:48 am)

Members absent:

- None

Quorum was established.

Staff present:

- Camille Frazier, SGC
- Tessa Salzman, SGC
- Meagan Wylie, Sacramento State

Advisory Committee Members present:

- Kathryn Lyddan

Action: Approval of Summary

Approval of Sept. 2, 2025, Meeting Summary.

Task Force Discussion:

None.

Public Comment:

None.

Action:

Member Payán moved to approve the meeting summary. Member Brown seconded. Motion passed. (2-0-1*). (*One absent.)

Working Session

Language Updates

Staff reviewed proposed revisions from external feedback, including:

- Updating 2.2a to “lease or transfer” (instead of “sell”), which members agreed was more expansive and inclusive of property rights such as covenants and charitable transfers.
- Replacing “protect” with “preserve” throughout Goal 2 language to better align with the Task Force’s stewardship values. Members agreed this change more clearly reflects preservation of agricultural land and soils.

Framing of Goal 2 and Subgoal 2.1

Subcommittee Members considered how to position Subgoal 2.1 within Goal 2. Members agreed that while the Task Force cannot create a full statewide agricultural land conservation plan, the recommendations can serve as the foundation for such a plan. They emphasized that the title and framing of Goal 2 should highlight preserving thriving agricultural land, which conveys stewardship and active use rather than just conservation.

Members discussed whether to remove 2.1 or integrate its concepts into the overall Goal 2 description. They agreed to leave as a separate goal but reduce redundancy where possible. Staff will reflect these revisions in the October draft Report.

Context Section Revisions

Staff presented proposed updates to the context section, aimed at balancing the need to steward agricultural land in the public domain with the reality that land ownership is often tied to farmers’ retirement security. Members agreed it is important to acknowledge retirement as a factor in land sales and affordability but emphasized that expansion of public farmland should not be contingent on retirement programs. They noted:

- Farmers may resist conservation easements if they limit retirement options, underscoring the need for broader retirement supports.
- Expanding public farmland increases accessibility and lowers entry barriers for new producers and businesses.
- Agriculture should be accessible to those pursuing both long-term and shorter-term farming careers.

Staff will adjust language to reflect the importance of retirement options while emphasizing the value of public land, revising “must” to “should” where appropriate, and leaving flexibility for broader discussion of retirement needs elsewhere in the report.

Public Land Holdings

Staff presented input from interagency reviewers and Task Force members cautioning against expanding public land holdings, citing cost, infrastructure, and stewardship capacity concerns. Members acknowledged that state and local governments currently face limitations but emphasized that these challenges stem from historic underinvestment rather than inherent ineffectiveness. Discussion highlighted:

- The potential for public ownership to democratize land access and provide greater accountability compared to reliance on philanthropy or private land trusts.
- The role of community land trusts as promising models for agricultural land use, contrasting with conservation easements that may restrict agricultural uses.
- Recognition that while current capacity is limited, long-term benefits of public ownership could outweigh upfront costs, especially in addressing land affordability.
- Opportunities for cities with resources to steward urban agricultural lands more effectively than counties with fewer resources.

Members agreed that language should distinguish between current capacity constraints and future vision. Member Payán will draft suggested framing language for consideration at the October Task Force meeting, and staff will prepare a flagged draft to capture key tensions for further discussion in October.

Recommendation 2.2.b.ii – Prioritizing Applicants

Subcommittee members considered concerns about operationalizing terms like “community-based” or “cultural humility.” They agreed existing definitions could be referenced and proposed including these in the glossary. Letters of support were suggested as a practical way to demonstrate alignment. No further changes were recommended.

Recommendation 2.2.c/d – Land Trusts and Community Co-Design

Subcommittee members discussed refinements to recommendations to ensure land trusts co-create conservation goals with community-based organizations. Members emphasized:

- The importance of requiring community engagement in defining conservation values, especially for Tribal Nations.
- Moving 2.2d under 2.2c to consolidate recommendations on training, tools, and co-design.
- Clarifying language to reflect accountability to communities, not only private landowners.

Regenerative Agriculture Practices

Members agreed to expand references to technical assistance (TA) to also include funding for implementation of regenerative agriculture practices. They emphasized refining language to include implementation without creating new subgoals.

Recommendation 2.3.b – Local Conservation Easement Programs

Members discussed whether counties and cities could administer agricultural conservation easement programs similar to the Sustainable Agricultural Land Conservation Program (SALC). Advisory Committee member Lydan noted existing examples in Davis, Yolo County, and Sonoma County. The Subcommittee did not add an additional recommendation.

Next Steps

- Staff will integrate changes into the October draft report, including refinements to Goal 2 framing, the context section, and recommendations.
- Member Payán will draft suggested language on public land holdings for the October meeting.
- Staff will add relevant definitions (e.g., “community-based”) to the glossary.

Public Comment:

- Kathryn Lyddan thanked the Subcommittee for their work and offered to assist with developing a clearer cost-benefit analysis of public versus private land conservation approaches.

General Public Comment:

None.

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

The meeting adjourned at 11 a.m.