

California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force Meeting Summary: February 12-13, 2025

February 12, 2025

Meeting Called to Order

Chair Nelson Hawkins called day one of the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m., with special thanks to the public and invited guest speakers for joining the meeting. Facilitator Meagan Wylie provided housekeeping information for all meeting participants. Slides and materials presented during the meeting are available on the Strategic Growth Council ([SGC](#)) [website](#).

Roll Call

Roll call was conducted by the facilitator. Members present:

- Nelson Hawkins, Chair
- Emily Burgueno, Vice Chair
- Ruth Dahlquist-Willard*
- Irene de Barraicua
- Darlene Franco*
- Lawrence Harlan
- James Nakahara
- Dorian Payán
- Thea Rittenhouse
- Doria Robinson
- Liya Schwartzman*
- Qi Zhou

Members absent:

- Nathaniel Brown

**Denotes virtual attendance.*

Quorum was established.

Staff Attendance:

Staff members present:

- Camille Frazier, California Strategic Growth Council
- Sean Kennedy, California Strategic Growth Council
- Tessa Salzman, California Strategic Growth Council

- Caleb Swanson, California Strategic Growth Council
- Meagan Wylie, California State University Sacramento

Opening Remarks

Staff provided opening remarks, acknowledging the meeting location in Coachella Valley, California. Staff recognized that the Cahuilla people have stewarded the land in this area since time immemorial and expressed respect for their elders. Staff also recognized Temalpakh Farm and the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians for hosting site visits the day before.

Action: Approval of Summary

Approval of November 13-14, 2024, Meeting Summary.

Task Force Discussion:

Task Force members requested the following revisions to the November 2024 summary:

- Include staff attendance,
- Add that Chairwoman Ramirez discussed how her Tribe's non-federally recognized status impacts its access to resources,
- Note that Task Force members will not receive per diem allowances for their subcommittee or working group participation,
- On page 13, change "Seek more input from Tribal Nations" to "Seek formal consultation with California Tribal nations," and
- On page 14, change "...the group agreed on the importance of involving Tribal Nations..." to "...the group discussed the importance of consulting federally recognized California Tribal Nations...."

Task Force members noted the importance of including non-federally recognized Tribal Nations in their work, emphasizing the important distinction between federally and non-federally recognized Tribal Nations. Lastly, members asked that staff provide details on public comments in future summaries.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

Action:

Member Harlan moved to approve the November meeting summary with the requested amendments. Member Rittenhouse seconded the motion.

Motion passes (11-0-2*). *Marks abstention or absence from vote.

Staff Report

SGC staff presented the Staff Report, sharing the following:

- A resource repository was developed for quarterly meetings. Similar repositories are under development for each subcommittee. All repositories can be found in the Member's Google Drive.
- A team of researchers from the University of California Irvine will work with the Land Use Governance and Sovereignty Subcommittee to conduct a policy workshop for the Task Force. They will also develop a policy brief relating to land use policy and agricultural land access for the Task Force's consideration.
- An updated budget table.
 - Members asked about the Task Force's funding for pilot projects and grants. Staff noted this will be discussed further in May.
- Updates on subcommittees.
- The development of a public speaker series.
 - In response to Task Force members' questions, staff shared that:
 - Guest speakers will be compensated,
 - Staff will investigate interpretation for the events,
 - The series is not restricted to California-based speakers,
 - The Bagley-Keene 10-day agenda posting requirement does not apply to these presentations as they are not convenings of the Task Force.
- Staff have convened a group of employees from various California state agencies to serve as interagency reviewers of the Task Force's report. The Governor's Office will be informed as the Task Force develops its report. Members requested that Staff develop a written plan for engagement with key legislators.
- Staff have identified nine people to serve on the Task Force's Advisory Committee (AC). A kickoff meeting for the AC is anticipated in March. The AC members were selected based on the alignment of their expertise with needs identified by the Task Force.
 - Task Force members can share gaps in the Advisory Committee's expertise with staff who can then identify people to fill these gaps. Due to conflict-of-interest concerns, members cannot request that staff select certain individuals for the AC.
 - In response to a Task Force member request, staff can provide information on the geographic diversity of AC members.

Task Force Discussion

A member shared that the California legislature is developing draft legislation, Senate Bill 462, regarding land access.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Presentation and Discussion: Land Consolidation, Land Markets, and Policy Responses

Staff introduced guest speaker Adam Calo of Radboud University. In his presentation, Adam Calo shared the following:

- The key components of the dominant property system.
- Three strategies for changing land use patterns:
 - Incentivize owners to manage lands differently,
 - Incentivize newcomer access to land, and
 - Restructure land markets to facilitate diversification.
- Property ownership can be viewed as a social relation between individuals, land, and the State.
- There are bedrock legal commitments to the ownership property model, such as the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments.
- The ownership model fosters lightly regulated land markets, making land an attractive investment.
- The global north has intervened in land markets through:
 - Prohibitions on foreign land ownership in Midwestern states,
 - Preemptive rights to buy,
 - For example, Scottish land reform measures allow communities to register an interest in any asset. When that land is put up for sale, the community has a first right of refusal to purchase said land.
 - Public interest programs, such as France's SAFER program (Société d'aménagement foncier et d'établissement rural),
 - Indigenous Land Return initiatives, and
 - The Farmland for Farmers Act, introduced by U.S. Senator Booker, which would prohibit corporate owners operating under certain legal structures from land ownership.

Calo stressed that those benefitting from the existing property structure system will strongly defend it against intervention. Disrupting it requires:

- The right legal innovations,
- Governance at the appropriate scale, and
- A compelling, mobilizing narrative.

Task Force Discussion:

Members asked Adam Calo the following:

- Has there been pushback on land market interventions?
 - Calo: Yes, particularly from those who benefit from the existing system. However, failing to intervene risks extreme land consolidation.
- Have land reform measures elsewhere led to expanded community care of land, such as at the watershed level?
 - Calo: These laws are new, but in some cases entire islands have been transferred to

community ownership. Early evidence suggests that this facilitates community-based decision-making. However, these properties—often worth millions—must still address economic issues such as road maintenance. Green energy has been the main economic driver.

- How do these proposed interventions advance access for socially disadvantaged and historically underserved farmers, ranchers, and Tribal land stewards?
 - Calo: Focusing solely on access will perpetuate exclusion and consolidation. Two key interventions should be pursued together to inform stronger, evidence-based solutions without directly challenging the foundational property system:
 - Establish a permanent land commission to act as a research agency on land issues.
 - Create a land observatory to monitor agricultural land ownership, purchases, and land types.
- Should special considerations be given to preemptive rights on public lands versus private lands?
 - Calo: There may be less opposition to changes on public land, but it is important to consider who is afforded the preemptive rights. The *Justice for Black Farmers Act*, introduced by U.S. Senator Booker, offers a valuable example.
- What path can be pursued to advance these land market interventions with minimal resistance?
 - Calo: Cultural reform is necessary. People must begin to think of land ownership as a responsibility to others. While this mindset is rare throughout the U.S., Montana's state constitution recognizes a right to a clean environment, demonstrating a shift in perspective.
 - Municipalities with ample land and a willingness to defend its actions in court are best suited to enact these changes. California, Hawaii, and Pacific Northwest states offer strong potential.
- How does Scotland's 'right to buy abandoned and vacant lots' work?
 - Calo: Communities have an absolute right to buy such properties. Multiple individuals or businesses seeking shared land ownership must create a single legal entity, assert this right to Scottish ministers, and then apply to the land fund. After raising enough funds, a community may purchase the property. Even the potential for a community to take such action can positively influence landowner behavior.
 - Scotland's million-dollar lottery fund used to assist communities in asset purchase was established prior to the land reform measures and allows communities with the appropriate legal entity to apply for funding.
- Can eminent domain be used for these purposes?
 - Calo: Case law generally favors private property holders. Further, many farmers value land ownership because of the financial security it provides.
- How might these interventions affect middle- or lower-class Californians who rely on property ownership for long-term financial stability?
 - Calo: Exemptions may be necessary to protect family homes and small farms.

Task Force members suggested the following:

- Adapt the *Surplus Land Act* model to develop a similar program for agricultural land.
- Investigate the land market intervention examples Adam Calo provided to determine their legal tenability and how they can be molded to fit California's context.
- Consult legal experts to determine whether the *Adverse Possession Doctrine* can be utilized to advance the Task Force's goals.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

The Task Force took a 60-minute break for lunch and resumed at 1:00 p.m.

Presentation and Discussion: Local Conditions in Coachella and Community-Driven Solutions

Guest speaker Elias Acevez presented to the Task Force on the effects of absenteeism in the Coachella Valley, sharing the following:

- Absenteeism refers to a landowner who does not live where they own land.
- A map demonstrating how numerous landowners in the Coachella Valley live in other areas, such as Los Angeles, the Bay Area, and Lake Tahoe.
 - La Quinta has the highest percentage of absent landowners in the Coachella Valley.
- Absenteeism signals a transfer of wealth out of the Coachella Valley.
 - Significant value is added after crops are harvested. Of all revenue generated by an agricultural operation, approximately 5/6 of the revenue may be transported out of the Coachella Valley region.
 - Every value chain within the agricultural market is important. Acevez encouraged the Task Force to consider issues beyond land, including produce packaging, cooling, and distribution networks.
- The western portion of the Coachella Valley has seen significant transition of agricultural land to residential development since the 1960s, often for those who own land in the eastern portion of the Valley.
- Farm management companies are necessary for absentee landowner agricultural operations to successfully operate.
- Land appreciation makes it expensive to buy land, often both discouraging and prohibiting aspiring farmers from entering the agriculture industry.
- Acevez has worked to identify potential agricultural land in the Coachella Valley that is not currently in agricultural production.
 - Vacant lands could be acquired and developed for agriculture that meets social or community needs.
 - Modifications to the Williamson Act could allow for the transition of recreational land to agricultural land.
 - Federally recognized Tribal Nations may repurpose land currently used for recreation into agricultural land when investment in agriculture is initially unfeasible, helping to enhance food sovereignty.

In response to Task Force member questions, Acevez clarified the distinction between absent and abandoned agricultural land. Absent land is owned by individuals not living on or near the land,

while abandoned lands are unmanaged. One member noted their organization uses the terms “operating” and “nonoperating” landowners, defining “absentee” landowners as those who are negligent in their care for the land. Another member encouraged the Task Force to consider vertical infrastructure in its report and recommendations.

Member de Barraicua then discussed Lideres Campesinas’ *Healing Land, Collective Power* report focused on farmworkers in Ventura County, sharing the following:

- Lideres Campesinas is a statewide network of farmworker women advocating for workers’ rights and changes that better enable farm workers to become operators.
- The research methods used for the report include surveys, focus groups, interviews, geographic information systems (GIS) mapping, and an academic literature review.
- Survey results of Ventura County farmworkers indicate a high interest in cooperative farming and owning land.
- Fifty-four percent of survey respondents indicated financial and economic support as their greatest need. Forty-three percent of these respondents subsequently indicated they did not know where they would seek such support.
- The greatest identified barriers to farm ownership were:
 - Land access,
 - Immigration status, and
 - Access to credit.
- The greatest identified barriers to becoming farm operators were:
 - Access to capital and financial institutions,
 - Limited technology literacy,
 - Language proficiency, and
 - Immigration status.
- Zoning laws were used against a farmer who planted approximately 200 fruit trees on their residentially zoned property. Conflicting interpretations of the zoning law created uncertainty about whether this constituted prohibited commercial farming.
- Farmworker focus groups revealed a desire for greater work autonomy, an increased share of economic benefits, and healthier work environments. While some participants supported full farmworker cooperatives, others favored individual management of plots of land within an overarching cooperative structure.
- The findings from interviews with alternative agricultural practitioners include:
 - Interviewees prefer direct financial support, not technical assistance, and
 - Long-term leases allow sustainable farming to reap benefits.
- Policy recommendations include:
 - Develop “first opportunity to purchase” ordinances,
 - Support succession planning for small farmers,
 - Assist with permitting for cooperatives,
 - Financially support the transition to organic farming,
 - Require farmland preservation in new development, and
 - Establish a Department of Agricultural Equity.
- The organization’s next steps are to purchase land and start a cooperative model.

Sergio Carranza, founder of Pueblo Unido Community Development Corporation (CDC), presented next. Carranza shared the following regarding his work with Polanco mobile home communities in the Coachella Valley region:

- There are over 400 mobile home parks in the Coachella Valley.
- Families need access to both land and housing.
- Families here come together to purchase land, build multi-generational housing, and farm. This is modeled after practices in Mexico.
- Three primary challenges identified through this work are:
 - Unsafe drinking water, including arsenic contamination,
 - Poor housing conditions, such as dilapidated mobile homes, and
 - Economic development challenges.
- Polanco mobile home communities account for 25% of the region's affordable housing and benefit from a streamlined permitting process under the Employee Housing Act.
- Warming temperatures and other climatic conditions are increasingly affecting those living in these communities.
- The communities struggle to receive state funding because they do not meet certain criteria, such as multifamily residency requirements, and are considered high risk communities.
- El Milagro Farms Eastern Coachella Valley (ECV), a community-owned economy on 40 acres of donated land, provides land access to small farmers for one dollar per year. The program offers training and educational opportunities with livable wages and benefits and focuses on organic specialty crops. The program practices regenerative agriculture in its goal to further climate change adaptation and resilience.
 - El Milagro Farms is working on a lease agreement for an adjacent 81 acres that will eventually be donated to the organization.
 - Surplus funding will be re-invested into the Rural Communities Investment Fund which will provide financial assistance for building agri-housing at 0% simple interest.
- Agriculture is key to addressing California's affordable housing problem.
- Many State programs are too complex and should be streamlined. Matching fund requirements should be removed, and nonprofits should be allowed to apply for funding on behalf of small farmers.

In response to Task Force member questions, Caranza highlighted the need for infrastructure development in Polanco communities to support agricultural production. He explained that while members of Polanco communities collectively own the land, individuals “unofficially own” and manage small plots of that land within the community.

A member suggested including in the report a recommendation to streamline the development of Polanco communities and programs like El Milagro Farms ECV.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

Discussion: Engagement Reports

Staff provided updates on the following:

- Resources in the Google Drive, including:
 - Survey materials,
 - Template outreach language,
 - Flyers,
 - A community outreach tracker, and more.

- The Land Access Experiences Survey:
 - 177 responses have been received,
 - The survey will remain open until the middle of April,
 - Staff will conduct a deeper analysis of survey results in May, and
 - Staff reviewed responses to questions about major past or present challenges related to land access and the resources that would be most helpful to address these challenges.

Members asked if there is a goal for the number of responses and asked if the survey could be sent out to specific organizations and groups, such as farmer training programs. While there is no defined response target, the aim is to collect as many responses as possible. Staff encouraged members to submit recommendations for organizations to distribute the survey to. In response to a member's question, staff shared that the survey has been sent to the Intertribal Agriculture Council and will work with the Task Force member on further outreach with the Council. Lastly, staff clarified that their analysis of survey results will be organized by categories of respondents.

Task Force members then provided verbal updates to highlight key takeaways from their more recent engagement efforts:

Esperanza Community Farms Site Visit, Nov. 2024

Task Force attendance:

- Irene de Barraicua
- Thea Rittenhouse

Staff Attendance:

- Tessa Salzman

Task Force members de Barraicua and Rittenhouse provided the following key takeaways from their site visit at Esperanza Community Farms on November 14, 2024.

- Land access is a challenge across California, but some challenges are unique to certain areas. Context matters.
- Ensuring land access for those who want to farm is essential.
- Many farmers face challenges with distribution and marketing, highlighting the need to assist farmers in selling and marketing their products.
- Farmers expressed a desire for direct funding, rather than allocation through intermediaries.
- Recent flooding had a significant impact in this area.
- Farmers are frustrated with repeatedly sharing their challenges, emphasizing the importance of meaningful follow-up with farmers who do share.
- Land affordability remains a significant challenge.

Allan Renz Livestock Site Visit, Nov. 2024

Task Force attendance:

- Lawrence Harlan
- Dorian Payán

Members Harlan and Payán shared the following key takeaway from their site visit at Allan Renz Livestock on November 14, 2024:

- This is a 900-acre stretch of public land.
- It is difficult to front 100% of capital.
- There is precarity in short term leases.
- Improvement costs are constant.
- More technical assistance and consulting are needed regarding leases on public land.
 - Requests for proposals require knowledge of topics like endemic species in an area.
- Leasing public land comes with many different responsibilities than private land, such as ensure gates are closed after hikers.
- Public leases are highly competitive and are at market rate.
- Housing is challenging.
 - Housing in this area existed at one time, but operators were unable to retrofit it for housing employees due to county permitting issues.
- The expansive public land that exists in California is under-utilized and could be used for ranching and agriculture.
- Grazing has many ecological benefits.
- The rancher identifies as an environmentalist, demonstrating care for public lands and species, and he does not permit overgrazing of the land.

Temalpakh Farm Site Visit, Feb. 2025

Task Force attendance:

- Emily Burgueno
- Thea Rittenhouse

Staff attendance:

- Camille Frazier
- Sean Kennedy
- Caleb Swanson

Vice Chair Burgueno and Member Rittenhouse shared the following takeaways from their site visit at Temalpakh Farm on February 11, 2025:

- The site visit largely focused on the farm's operations.
- The Augustine Band of Cahuilla Indians has approximately 600 acres of land, and the farm is approximately 40 acres in size.
- A Natural Resources Conservation Service grant helped the farm build out its native plant hedgerows.
- Members of the Tribal Nation do not live on the reservation due to lack of land security or inability.
- A small casino is also on the land.

Torres Martinez Desert Compost Site Visit, Feb. 2025

Task Force attendance:

- Lawrence Harlan
- James Nakahara

Task Force members Nakahara and Harlan provided the following key takeaways from their site visit at Torres Martinez Desert Compost on February 11, 2025:

- Land allotment has been a significant challenge for this Tribal Nation, with its land ownership reflecting a “Tetris puzzle”.
 - Much of the Tribal Nation’s land was transferred as a result of the Dawes Act.
- Establishing a land commission or observatory would be valuable for understanding the composition of land throughout California.
- Accessing land is complex due to fragmented plot distribution, decentralization, lack of access to resources, and illegal dumping.
- Despite challenges, the Nation is engaged in substantial long-term planning efforts, including wetland restoration, local waterway cleanup through natural vegetation, and broader ecological initiatives.
- A major challenge they face is a broken well that remains unfixed.
- They conduct air quality testing and relay their findings to the community.
- A local district is trying to modify its soil management practices to create a dust cap to help mitigate poor air quality.

EcoFarm Listening Session, Jan. 2025

Task Force member attendance:

- Nelson Hawkins
- James Nakahara

Staff Attendance

- Tessa Salzman

Chair Hawkins and Member Nakahara shared the following key takeaways from their listening session at the EcoFarm Conference on January 23, 2025:

- The session was structured with a brief introduction of the Task Force before participants dispersed into three smaller breakout groups.
- One group had a strong focus on urban agriculture, with participants noting the challenges of navigating ordinances and legal frameworks. Establishing long-term access to land in urban areas is particularly challenging.
- Another group had significant discussion regarding challenges with development, the evaluation of housing, qualifications for land seekers, and the size of parcels.
 - Some agriculture lenders mentioned programs they viewed as effective, but other attendees disagreed on their level of effectiveness.
- Recommendations that emerged from conversation were:

- Support land trusts,
- Advance anti-monopolization to inhibit corporate land consolidation, and
- Utilize cultural easements.
- The Agroecology Commons Farmer Training Program was identified as an effective way of connecting people with farmland and farm experiences.

Coachella Community Engagement Session, Feb. 2025

Task Force Attendance:

- Irene de Barraicua
- Dorian Payán

Staff attendance:

- Tessa Salzman
- Agustin Arreola (communications staff at Strategic Growth Council)

Co-hosts:

- Lideres Campesinas
- Pueblo Unido

Members Payán and de Barraicua shared the following key takeaways from the listening session on February 11, 2025:

- The session focused on small and beginning farmers. Twenty-two farmers attended.
- Many attendees rent land. Some had gardens in their backyard. They grew a variety of crops.
- Key challenges identified through the engagement session were:
 - Access to markets,
 - Cooling requirements,
 - Cooperatives and water issues,
 - Lack of school to agriculture pipeline,
 - Lack of guidance,
 - Few smaller parcels available,
 - Land affordability, and
 - Food safety regulation requirements.
- Follow up with session attendees is important. One suggestion is to share updates on the Task Force's process directly with the organizations who helped to organize the event.

Staff asked for greater clarity regarding the challenges posed by food safety regulations. Task Force members provided the following information:

- Producers may not know of compliance requirements.
- Volume requirements to sell at markets and for wholesale—i.e. three pallets of produce—can be difficult for smaller producers.
 - The requirement to demonstrate compliance with the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) for markets can also be prohibitive.
 - Some small-scale producers work together to meet volume requirements.

- Cold chain and cold storage requirements can also pose challenges.
 - Zoning and permitting requirements can make it difficult to build, or prohibit altogether the building of cold storage.
- Zoning and permitting requirements can also make it difficult to establish, or may prohibit altogether, establishing produce washing facilities.
- The Community Alliance with Family Farmers assists farmers with FSMA requirements.

Upcoming Engagement Plans:

Member Harlan provided an overview of proposed engagement for the May 2025 meeting, which will take place in Susanville, California. Tribal leaders in the area will be invited to speak with the Task Force.

Staff shared they will work with University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UCANR) to conduct service provider interviews, intending to reach the broadest range of individuals possible, and will work with UCANR to host additional listening sessions. Staff asked for input from Members regarding how these engagement sessions should be structured. Task Force members shared the following:

- Express how the Task Force and its final report will impact attendees' daily lives.
- Develop a set of priority recommendations that can be evaluated during engagement sessions, with flexibility depending on the context of the event.
- Focus on breadth of topics or ideas, rather than narrowing discussion sessions to a few concepts.
- Organize the sessions into small group discussions.
- Focus on how Tribal Nations are connected to the communities being discussed.

A member encouraged further engagement with Southern California Tribal Nations, and members emphasized the importance of having the Task Force's products available in multiple languages. Members reaffirmed the importance of following up with those with whom the Task Force engages.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Working Session

Staff presented the initial draft of the Report and Recommendations of the California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force and reviewed the drafting process discussed in the previous meeting. They provided Task Force members with a worksheet to help them critically evaluate the draft's content. Members spent approximately one hour reviewing the report individually or in pairs, completing the worksheet in preparation for discussions on day two of the meeting.

General Public Comment

No Public Comment

February 13, 2025

Meeting Called to Order

Chair Nelson Hawkins called day two of the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m., with special thanks to the public and invited guest speakers for joining the meeting. Facilitator Meagan Wylie provided housekeeping information for all meeting participants. Slides and materials presented during the meeting are available on the Strategic Growth Council ([SGC](#)) [website](#).

Roll Call

Roll call was conducted by the facilitator. Members present:

- Nelson Hawkins, Chair
- Emily Burgueno, Vice Chair
- Ruth Dahlquist-Willard*
- Irene de Barraicua
- Darlene Franco*
- Lawrence Harlan
- James Nakahara
- Dorian Payán
- Thea Rittenhouse
- Doria Robinson
- Liya Schwartzman*
- Qi Zhou

Members absent:

- Nathaniel Brown

**Denotes virtual attendance.*

Quorum was established.

Staff Attendance:

Staff members present:

- Camille Frazier, California Strategic Growth Council
- Sean Kennedy, California Strategic Growth Council
- Tessa Salzman, California Strategic Growth Council
- Caleb Swanson, California Strategic Growth Council
- Meagan Wylie, California State University Sacramento

Working Session

Staff provided an overview of the working session and its associated goals before providing time for Task Force members to engage in a “pair-and-share” activity to discuss the report and their ideas. Members then reconvened and engaged in full group discussion.

Report Feedback

Task Force members provided general feedback on the draft report, including:

- Address issues of allottees being landlocked and unable to access their land because of allotment.
- Make the report shorter and more concise. Edit to remove repetition.
- Present data strengthening the case for why land equity is needed in the Overview section, including how it can assist California in meeting its climate and conservation goals.
 - Note: While transferring land to those historically excluded from ownership does not guarantee better ecological outcomes, the State can create incentives to promote better ecological practices. Additionally, many large corporate-owned farms are already adopting climate-smart agricultural practices.
- Reflect in the report how land stewardship involves responsibility for taking care of the land and is not simply ownership.
- Include the benefits of having a diversity of farmers.
- Provide the recommendations as the first part of the report, followed by context and rationale sections.
- Include a summary of priority recommendations at the end of the overview section.
- Consider structuring the report around what certain actors should do—legislature, governor, municipalities, land trusts, counties, etc.
- Include narrative about challenges faced by aspiring farmers.
- Modify language regarding and include more census data.
- Revise references to the Farmer Equity Act.
- Include additional narrative regarding labor exploitation and the needs of farmworkers.
- Provide options and frameworks for regional communities, counties, and municipalities to revise zoning and permitting requirements that have historically made rural housing construction difficult.
- Avoid jargon and clearly articulate the Task Force’s message, such as replacing “dispossession” with “theft of land from California Tribal Nations” and explicitly state the attempted extermination of California Tribal Nations.
 - Provide a glossary of key terms at the end of the document.
- Clearly distinguish between land acquisition and tenure, emphasizing that land ownership alone does not ensure a viable agricultural enterprise, as access to capital is also essential.
- Include the stories of Allensworth and the dispossession of land from Japanese Farmworkers as a result of Order 9066.
- Incorporate stories and information the Task Force has gathered from its engagement efforts throughout the report.
- Consider alternative presentation models, like a short video, or develop a companion document.
- Include goals in the recommendations.
- Modify select headings to include Tribal Nations’ context.

- Make specific language changes, such as:
 - Use “traditional land steward” in addition to farmers and ranchers,
 - Replace phrase “priority communities” to avoid assumptions about meaning based on existing definitions,
 - Use “Tribal liaisons and Tribal leaders” to refer to associated members of the Task Force, and
 - Find another word for “sustainability.”

The Task Force also discussed the definition of “priority communities” to clarify who the Task Force is referring to in its report. Members debated:

- Explicitly including women,
- The value of using the term “beginning farmer” and how it can be used by corporations starting to farm, and
- Whether using broad language reduces effectiveness.

Staff reviewed the definition of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers from the Farmer Equity Act with the Task Force, noting its conflict with Proposition 209. Task Force members noted the problems with relying on CalEnviroScreen, particularly its exclusion of individuals who live in wealthy areas but who need assistance. Members also noted that many farmers do not like the term socially disadvantaged because it does not accurately reflect their individual circumstances. Staff will work with legal counsel to further refine these ideas.

Members also noted the importance of aligning on who constitutes the Task Force’s target communities.

The Task Force then discussed the section of the report focused on barriers and provided the following feedback:

- Challenge the prevailing narrative that land is inherently meant to increase in value, acknowledging the dynamic tension between affordability and wealth building.
 - Recommend the creation of a pension fund and consider other alternatives to wealth building.
- Recognize the issue of slow-moving capital when land becomes available for purchase.
- Address housing allowances, as the inability to live on the land creates significant challenges.
- Include legal barriers to owning and operating land collectively.
- Refine language stating that “land is not available” to clarify that *suitable* land for purchase is highly limited.
- Modify report language to reflect the social relationships of land—land itself does not take action, but people shape its use and value.
- Provide an explicit recognition that agricultural land is a part of broader ecological systems.
 - Incorporate an agroecology lens throughout the report.
 - Incentivize, not require, ecologically beneficial practices to ensure farmer autonomy.
- Incorporate data on land ownership by large corporations to provide a clearer picture of land distribution.
- Highlight the exploitation of labor on agriculturally zoned land where workers are engaged in non-agricultural labor.

Work Planning

Staff reviewed a proposed timeline for advancing the work of the Task Force. Members expressed concern over sending the version of draft report reviewed during this meeting to the AC and interagency reviewers at this time, indicating their preference to have a full-Task Force discussion on the recommendations section of the report first. After hearing from several members, the Task Force decided to host another in-person meeting in Berkeley, California in late March. Members also noted the need to work asynchronously to provide feedback on the draft report.

Staff committed to sharing additional information with the Task Force regarding engagement sessions and will work with Member Franco and Vice-Chair Burgueno on outreach with Tribal Nations. In response to Task Force requests, staff will develop summaries of guest speaker series presentations, highlighting information with direct connections to the Task Force and its report. Tentative subcommittee meetings were scheduled for the coming months.

Public Comment

- Shayna, University of California Santa Cruz
 - Asserted that the management of land by diverse individuals does lead to better ecological outcomes and asked for experience qualifications for grants and other programs to be reduced or expanded to account for other forms of experience, such as credit hours achieved at an institution of higher education or research.
- Seth Wilson, World Be Well/Healing Living Systems
 - Encouraged the Task Force to focus on disadvantaged and underserved communities in its report. Also noted that land protection efforts create opportunities for nature-based solutions. Further recommended that the Task Force include community food producer and gleaner, as defined in California statute, to provide flexibility around zoning issues in urban and peri-urban environments.
- Marisa Raya, University of California Davis
 - Encouraged the report overview to discuss material and historical events that continue to affect the Task Force's priority communities. Also encouraged the Task Force to set goals and accountability metrics for its recommendations.

Member Robinson responded to a public comment to clarify her remarks regarding diverse food producers and their ecological management of land.

General Public Comment

- Adam X, CEO Original Manufacturing Inc.
 - Expressed support for the Task Force reconvening to discuss the policy recommendations, asserting the importance of recommendations being well-structured and enforceable. Also encouraged the Task Force to consider extending its legal life to oversee the distribution of funds through Proposition 4.

Meeting Adjournment

Chair Hawkins and Vice Chair Burgueno provided closing comments. Chair Hawkins adjourned the meeting at 12:37 p.m.

