

**STATE OF CALIFORNIA
REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
CENTRAL COAST REGION**

STAFF REPORT FOR REGULAR MEETING OF April 20-21, 2023

Prepared on April 4, 2023

ITEM NUMBER: 9

SUBJECT: California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)
Healthy Soils Program

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ACTION: Information/Discussion

SUMMARY

Dr. Ravneet Behla of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) will present on the CDFA's [Healthy Soils Program](#)¹ (HSP) and [State Water Efficiency & Enhancement Program](#)² (SWEEP). CDFA's Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation is piloting block grant programs for the HSP and SWEEP. Under Block Grant program framework, CDFA will award \$2-5 million grants to entities such as Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs), universities and community colleges, local or regional government agencies, and nonprofits. Grantees will select projects and administer them in coordination with farmers and ranchers within their service areas. CDFA will start accepting applications for these two programs in March 2023.

The Healthy Soils Program stems from the California Healthy Soils Initiative, a collaboration of state agencies and departments to promote the development of healthy soils on California's farmlands and ranchlands. The HSP has two components: the [HSP Incentives Program](#)³ and the [HSP Demonstration Projects](#).⁴

The HSP Incentives Program provides financial assistance for implementation of conservation management that improve soil health, sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In the Central Coast Region, several projects were funded

¹ HSP website: <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/healthysoils/> and HSP block grant pilot program website: <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/healthysoils/BlockGrantProgram.html>

² SWEEP website: <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/sweep/>

³ HSP Incentives Program website, see 2021 list of awarded projects. <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/healthysoils/IncentivesProgram.html>

⁴ HSP Demonstration Projects website, see 2021 HSP demonstration Projects list updated November 1, 2021: <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/healthysoils/DemonstrationProjects.html>

that align with the Agricultural Orders incentives for irrigation and nutrient management such as compost application, cover crops, and nutrient management.

The HSP Demonstration Projects showcase California farmers and rancher's implementation of HSP practices. Several HSP Demonstration Projects were funded in 2021 within the Central Coast Region for the above-mentioned practices as well as for tillage management and mycorrhizal application. A few of these projects will be highlighted in this presentation.

The SWEEP program provides grants to implement irrigation systems that reduce greenhouse gases and save water on California agricultural operations. This includes soil moisture monitoring, drip systems, low pressure irrigation systems, pump retrofits and various other practices to improve irrigation efficiency and reduce on-farm water use.

Dr. Behla will discuss these programs and highlight Central Coast projects funded by CDFA's HSP in recent years. Dr. Behla can be reached by email at Ravneet.Behla@cdfa.ca.gov.

⁵ General Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Irrigated Lands, Order No. R3-2021-0040. https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/water_issues/programs/ilp/docs/ag_order4/2021/ao4_order.pdf