

Charter

1. Purpose and Overview of the Charter

This Charter provides the purpose of the **Scientific Prioritization and Review Committee (SPARC)** and an overview of the authority, scope of activity, and governance and meeting structure.

State law (Food and Agricultural Code [FAC] section 12824) requires the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) to continuously evaluate pesticides currently registered in California. This process includes the ongoing review of scientific research, data collected through DPR programs, and the investigations conducted by County Agricultural Commissioners. DPR maintains a summary of all [continuous evaluation and mitigation](#) efforts underway, updated annually at minimum. SPARC and the associated prioritization process is established to provide an orderly, science-based process for DPR to transparently discuss potential priority actions related to continuous evaluation and mitigation. The process includes opportunity for the committee and the public to recommend that DPR prioritize additional continuous evaluation or mitigation actions. The primary pathway for DPR to consider additions and changes to department actions will be based on topics discussed at SPARC meetings.

The prioritization process and associated SPARC will support implementation of Sustainable Pest Management (SPM) in alignment with the department's authorities and responsibilities. The prioritization process is a data-driven, transparent approach to identify and communicate potential department actions relative to continuous evaluation and mitigation.

2. Authority

SPARC was established in the public interest and supports DPR in performing its role and responsibilities in carrying out DPR's statutory obligation to develop an orderly program for the continuous evaluation of all pesticides registered in California, pursuant to FAC section 12824, and implementing regulations. In addition, the Legislature has declared it important for California to implement SPM as defined by FAC section 11412. As part of SPM implementation, the Legislature stated its intent that DPR improve California's pesticide registration processes and bring more alternatives to market by, among other things, improving its processes for evaluating pesticides already registered and requiring DPR's processes to reflect the goals of SPM. Consistent with the expressed Legislative intent, DPR's 2024-2028 strategic plan includes a goal to develop and implement a science-based prioritization process informed by an established diverse cross-sector, scientific advisory committee. As an advisory committee, SPARC is established to make suggestions to DPR. SPARC acts only in an advisory capacity and primarily functions to deliberate and make recommendations but does not possess decision-making authority. SPARC is not

an oversight committee and does not have authority to monitor, oversee, or intervene in the operations and activities of government agencies.

The DPR Director maintains full decision-making authority about whether to accept or implement SPARC's recommendations and update the department's prioritized actions. In considering SPARC's recommendations, the DPR Director may consider available budget allocations, legal authorities, and other factors. The Department's final priorities will be added to its website and communicated with SPARC on at least an annual basis.

3. Objective and Scope of Activity

The objective of SPARC is to provide recommendations to DPR to inform a data-driven, transparent, and coordinated approach to prioritize actions related to identifying and mitigating risks to human health and the environment resulting from pesticide use. SPARC meetings will discuss topics including relative priority of potential continuous evaluation or mitigation actions, data availability and data gaps, scope of scientific assessment, mitigation, and feasible alternatives. The DPR Director maintains full decision-making authority about whether to accept or implement SPARC's recommendations. The outcome of the process is for DPR to establish the relative priority of various potential actions with input from SPARC with opportunity for public comment.

DPR is authorized to evaluate all pesticides in California and is given discretion to determine the order in which pesticides may be evaluated. The establishment of priorities for evaluation and mitigation and associated allocation of Departmental resources is intended to ensure the efficiency and enforcement of DPR's statutory duties and do not require individuals or entities that may be affected to do anything they are not already required to do. DPR's prioritized actions may include:

- Initiating a human health or environmental risk assessment to characterize potential risks.
- Requesting or requiring data from registrants to address identified data gaps, which may include initiating a reevaluation.
- Developing mitigation to address risks identified through a risk assessment, which may include a regulatory action.
- Initiating cancellation of a pesticide use where risks have been identified if mitigation isn't feasible and there are feasible alternatives.

In addition, the department may initiate discussions on feasible alternatives to pesticides where risks have been identified by DPR. Where DPR has identified a lack of available alternatives, the department may grant expedited registration of alternatives and/or support research on alternatives through grant programs.

4. Governance Structure

a. SPARC Leadership

The Director will designate a chairperson to preside over SPARC meetings. In collaboration with the Deputy Director for Registration and Evaluation, Deputy Director of Monitoring and Mitigation, and support staff, the chairperson is responsible for preparing the draft agenda and distributing the agenda to members prior to meetings. The chairperson will relay information to other DPR committees through internal processes.

b. SPARC Composition

DPR will solicit nominations on a rolling basis for the committee. In addition to the chairperson, the director will select an advisory committee that consists of a maximum of 15 external members with scientific and practitioner expertise in the following areas:

- Agricultural Academic Extension
- Agricultural Practitioner
- Ecotoxicologist
- Environmental Expertise (e.g., toxicologist, ecologist, environmental scientist)
- Human Health Toxicologist
- Public Drinking Water or Wastewater Utilities Expertise
- Public Health Expertise (e.g., human health toxicologist, farmworker expertise)
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge
- Urban Practitioner
- Urban Academic Extension

c. Appointment and Term

Committee members are appointed by and serve at the discretion of the Director. Members will serve staggered two-year terms, except in the first year of SPARC where half the members will serve for a period of three years. Members may reapply and be reappointed at the end of their term. The Director may remove a member upon demonstration of reasonable cause. Reasonable cause shall not include any policy position taken by the member in their capacity as a member of SPARC.

d. Members Responsibilities

- i. Members are expected to attend all SPARC meetings and should contact DPR in advance of the meeting if an absence is expected.

- ii. Members may resign at any time by submitting a written notification to the Director or their designee.

5. Meeting Structure

SPARC shall meet up to four times per year in Sacramento, virtual attendance will be made available. DPR will prepare meeting agendas and associated meeting materials. Review of meeting materials in advance of meeting is required. The majority of the meetings are open to the public with opportunity to provide public feedback on agenda items either as a part of the meeting or in informal written comment periods. A closed portion of the meeting may be requested by SPARC or DPR.

DPR, SPARC, or the public may recommend pesticides for further continuous evaluation and mitigation actions from the department. DPR will utilize data-driven approaches to determine which potential priorities move to the SPARC for discussion. Potential priorities will be discussed at SPARC meetings that are open to the public. Discussion of each potential priority will include available data (e.g., toxicity, environmental fate, monitoring, illness reports) and be put in context of past regulatory action at the State and Federal Level.

Quarterly meetings may vary in focus and agenda with at least two focused on recommendations for continuous evaluation and mitigation actions and at least two providing updates on current DPR priorities and actions.

6. Records

DPR will post online and make publicly available:

- a. Meeting summary
- b. Meeting agendas
- c. Recommended potential priorities from SPARC and the public.
- d. Public comments received.
- e. Alternative analyses developed by DPR, as applicable.

7. Disclaimers

This Charter does not alter or modify the terms of any law and does not constitute legal advice. This Charter is not a regulation, and it does not create, expand, limit, waive, or interpret any legal rights or obligations. It does not affect or diminish any rights or protections afforded to any person or entity under any law. Nothing in this charter will be construed to prevent DPR from taking timely action to fulfill legal obligations to protect public health and safety, or the environment.

8. Duration

The SPARC Charter will remain in effect until revised.