



Roles and Responsibilities - Scientific Prioritization and Review Committee (SPARC)

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Roles and Responsibilities

Scientific Prioritization and Review Committee (SPARC)

Intro

The Scientific Prioritization and Review Committee (SPARC) and associated prioritization process is established to provide an orderly, transparent, science-based approach for the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) to prioritize actions related to continuous evaluation and mitigation. SPARC will advise DPR throughout a data-driven, transparent, and coordinated approach that will identify and prioritize actions related to continuous evaluation and mitigation. The committee members will use their diverse backgrounds, experiences, and understanding of pesticides and pest management practices to have science-based and risk-based discussions to inform and advise DPR on prioritizing actions associated with continuous evaluation and mitigation. SPARC meetings provide a public forum for committee members to provide feedback to DPR on potential priority actions and timelines; and allow transparency of public comments. The process includes opportunity for the committee and the public to recommend that DPR prioritize additional continuous evaluation or mitigation actions. The process includes opportunity for public engagement including a pathway to recommend that DPR prioritize additional continuous evaluation or mitigation actions.

Prioritization Process and Committee Role

The prioritization process and associated SPARC will support implementation of Sustainable Pest Management (SPM) in alignment with the department's authorities and responsibilities. DPR is authorized to evaluate all pesticides in California and is given discretion to determine the order in which pesticides may be evaluated. The prioritization process is a data-driven, transparent approach to identify and communicate potential department actions relative to continuous evaluation and mitigation.

The outcome of this process and final list of department priorities will be reflected in updates to DPR's [Continuous Evaluation and Mitigation Update Table](#) (CEMT). This table will also track shifting priorities as new actions are discussed and prioritized by DPR, reflective of discussions occurring at SPARC. The prioritization process is the primary pathway for the department to initiate new actions or reprioritize current efforts. Continuous evaluation¹ and mitigation efforts may be initiated internally by the

¹ California Food and Agricultural Code (FAC) § 12824



department or externally based on committee submitted or public submitted potential priorities. The role of the committee for internal and external priorities will vary.

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.

DPR Priorities

When the department initiates new continuous evaluation and mitigation efforts, DPR will agendize each action to discuss at SPARC meetings. The department may have targeted questions for the advisory committee related to elements such as the scope of scientific review, relative priority of multiple potential priorities for initiating human health or environmental risk assessment, or other focused scientific questions. As a part of SPARC meetings, DPR will identify where alternatives analysis may be in process by the department, California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), or other entities. DPR will initiate actions on up to four priority actions per year.

External Submitted Potential Priorities

The department will initiate actions on up to four externally submitted priorities a year: up to two from the committee and up to two from the public. The actions on externally submitted priorities will vary depending on criteria described herein (Figure 1).

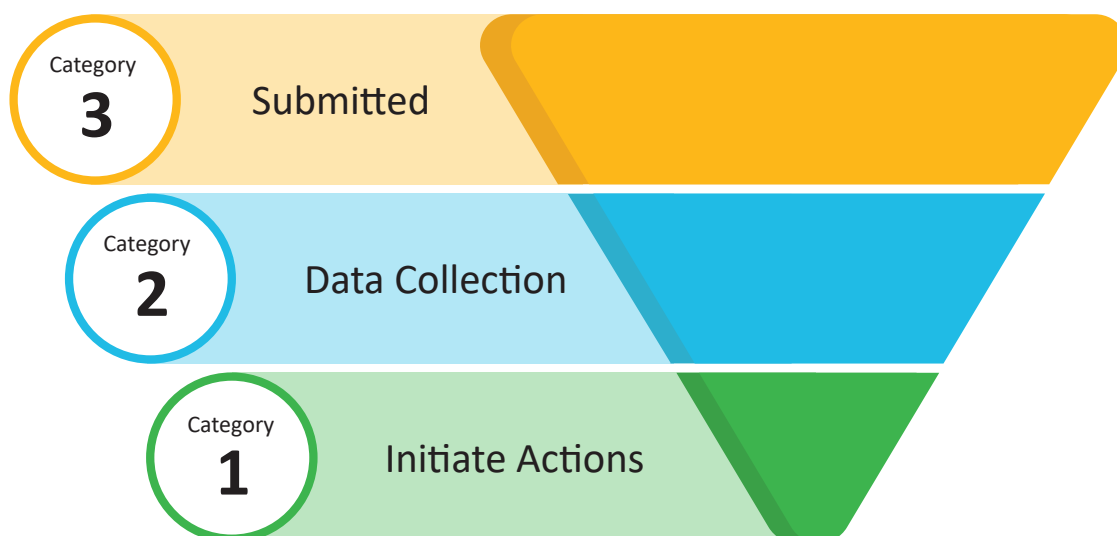


Figure 1. Categories for externally submitted potential priorities.



The SPARC members and the public will have the opportunity to submit potential priorities to the department. All submittals are considered Category 3. The department will post to our website summary information for all submitted potential priorities including but not limited to active ingredient(s), exposure end point of concern, and person(s) or organization(s) submitting.

The department anticipates that there will be more potential priorities submitted than can feasibly be discussed during quarterly SPARC meetings. For a subset of submitted potential priorities, identified as Category 2, DPR will summarize available data including but not limited to state and federal regulatory actions, pesticide use reporting (PUR) summary, Pesticide Illness Surveillance Program (PISP) data, monitoring data (e.g., air, surface water, groundwater, ecosystem), and summary of human health and environmental toxicity endpoints. The selection of Category 3 potential priorities for Category 2 discussion by the department will be data-driven and rely on a combination of toxicity data, use information, and exposure data. In advance of SPARC meetings, the committee will review any data that is included as a part of the submission for potential priorities identified as Category 2 and the scientific and regulatory overview compiled by the department. The committee will provide feedback and recommendations to DPR to be considered during DPR's development of action plans for each potential priority including recommendations on relative priority for Category 2 potential priority actions. DPR may provide recommendations on potential priorities that merit action within the Category 2 potential priorities. SPARC may provide recommendations on Category 3 potential priorities for future consideration and data development in Category 2. The Director will take into consideration available information, recommendations from the committee, and capacity within the department to determine which potential priorities are selected to move forward (Category 1).

The final list of potential priorities for DPR action (Category 1) will be the key outcome of the SPARC. Category 1 priorities identified by SPARC will inform DPR's final list of prioritized actions and will be reflected in the CEMT on DPR's website.

Developing Priority Actions

The action necessary to address any potential priority will vary depending on a number of factors. The flowchart in Figure 2 shows considerations for developing action plans for DPR's priorities and Category 1 potential priorities. First, are their risks identified with sufficient data as a part of a quality risk assessment? If a quality risk assessment is not available, the department may initiate human health or environmental risk assessments².

² FAC § 12824 and FAC § 11454.1



The department develops mitigation actions to address risks identified. Mitigation can include adding or expanding training to reduce potential incidents, label changes or regulatory changes to mitigate potential risks, or cancellation if mitigation is not possible. If risks are not identified or have already been mitigated (potentially by previous U.S. EPA or DPR actions) no action would be taken, and that specific potential priority would not be reviewed again by SPARC unless a new concern supported by scientific data was submitted.

The department may initiate a reevaluation as part of developing priority actions. California Code of Regulations, Title 3, Section 6220, et seq. describes the reevaluation process. DPR conducts pesticide reevaluations where, after investigating reported episodes or other information, the department determines that “a significant adverse impact has occurred or is likely to occur.” In some cases, a risk assessment may be conducted as a part of a reevaluation.

When the risks have been identified and mitigation development has been initiated, the department may develop an overview of feasible alternatives. SPARC may be asked for recommendations on individuals that may have specialized knowledge of a particular pesticide use or a pesticide’s alternatives. Where there may not be a feasible alternative available, the department may expedite registration of new alternatives and support research of alternatives through grant programs. DPR would work closely with CDFA’s Office of Pesticide Consultation and Analysis (OPCA)³ on any decisions focused on pest management alternatives or potential impacts to agricultural crops and the prioritization process would not be duplicative of OPCA’s efforts.

There may be instances where significant risks are identified that lead to a reprioritization of current actions or shift in timelines for current action plans in order to more swiftly address concerns.

At any point throughout the process, if DPR determines a submitted potential priority does not present a risk or that regulatory action at the state or federal level has addressed risks, DPR will identify that a submitted priority will not result in department action. (see Figure 2).

Public Engagement

DPR will post meeting agendas in advance of planned SPARC meetings, and simultaneously open informal public comment in advance of SPARC meetings. DPR will provide SPARC members access to submitted comments to review prior to meetings. In addition, all SPARC meetings will be open to the public with opportunity for public comment at the end of the agenda and will have time for the public

³ FAC § 1145.2

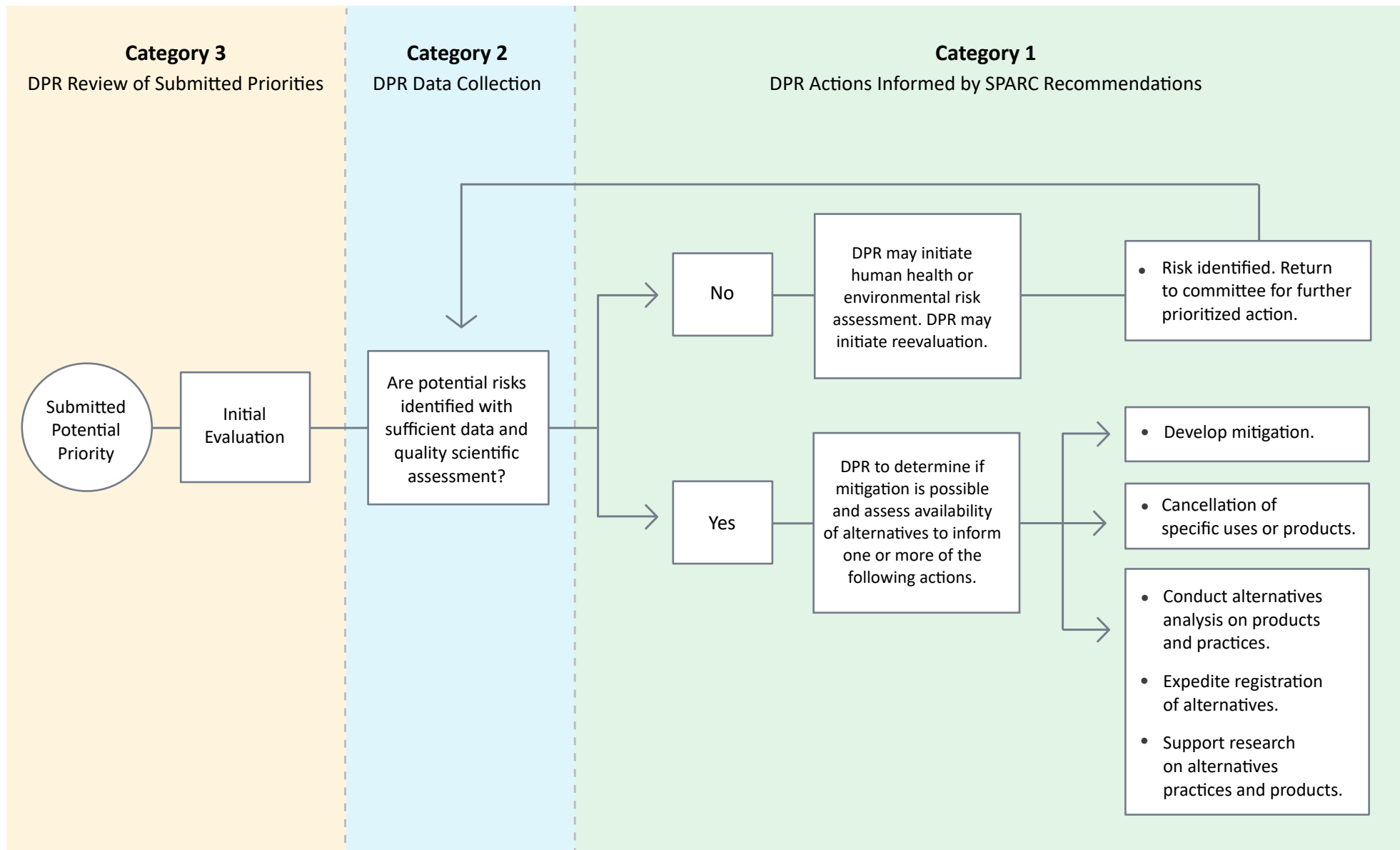


Figure 2. Flowchart for developing action plans for DPR priorities and recommendations for actions plans from SPARC



to comment on meeting agenda items. There will also be an online portal or email address where comments from the advisory committee or the public can be submitted directly to DPR.

Guiding Principles and Conflict of Interests

SPARC's work and discussions shall be grounded in science and draw upon committee members' scientific knowledge, education, and experience.

SPARC members' feedback and recommendations to DPR will follow the appropriate principles and rules of self-governance to prevent conflicts of interest while maintaining the highest standards for integrity, equity, and honesty to safeguard the public trust, increase public understanding, and provide recommendations to DPR.

SPARC members may not make, participate in making, or in any way use or attempt to use their position as a SPARC member to influence a governmental decision when they know or have reason to know they have a disqualifying financial interest.

SPARC Roles and Responsibilities

The advisory committee will be expected to:

1. Advise DPR: 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. This may include but not limited to recommendations on relative priority of potential continuous evaluation or mitigation actions, data availability and data gaps, scope of scientific assessment, mitigation, and feasible alternatives.
2. Work professionally and constructively with DPR, fellow SPARC members, and meeting attendees. SPARC meetings will be open to the public and include opportunity for public comment in advance of the meeting.
3. Review all materials provided in advance of meetings to ensure timely and productive meetings.
4. Participate Actively: SPARC will meet up to 4 times per year, and members are expected to attend all advisory group meetings.



DPR Roles and Responsibilities

DPR will:

1. **Provide Onboarding:** DPR will support SPARC members by providing onboarding information and materials to familiarize members with their new role and responsibilities, California's pesticide regulatory framework, and DPR's continuous evaluation and mitigation processes.
2. **Present and Support Submission of Potential Priorities:** DPR will provide a process for the submission of potential priorities. DPR will be responsible for utilizing data driven approach to determine which Category 3 potential priorities are selected to develop data as a part of Category 2 and inclusion in SPARC meeting agendas. For Category 2 potential priorities, DPR will summarize available data including but not limited to state and federal regulatory actions, PUR summary, PISP data, monitoring data (e.g., air, surface water, groundwater, ecosystem), and summary of human health and environmental toxicity endpoints.
3. **Post Records:** Post meeting, meeting summaries, recommended priorities from SPARC and the public, public comments received, and alternative analyses developed by DPR, as applicable.
4. **Coordinate with other [DPR committees](#):** DPR has a number of advisory committees each with individual roles and objectives that act independently of each other.
 - [Pesticide Registration and Evaluation Committee](#) (PREC) – Interagency committee tasked with advising DPR on its regulatory actions and decisions on the proposed registration, renewal, and reevaluation of pesticide products.
 - [Pest Management Advisory Committee](#) (PMAC) – Tasked with evaluating and recommending research and outreach grant awards, to projects focused on integrated and sustainable pest management.
 - [Agricultural Pest Control Advisory Committee](#) (APCAC) – Advises DPR on matters concerning licensing and certification, educational requirements, study materials and examinations to support safe and competent, sustainable pest management practices by businesses and individual license and certificate holders.
 - [Environmental Justice Advisory Committee](#) (EJAC) – Established by AB 652, tasked with advising DPR on ways to integrate environmental justice considerations into departmental programs policies, decision making, and activities and how the department can improve community engagement.



- Sustainable Pest Management (SPM) Advisory Committee– In development, to support the Department in building the foundation for implementing SPM and advancing the Department’s vision for safe, effective, and sustainable pest management. This Committee will complement SPARC by providing a forum for broader policy efforts associated with SPM.
6. Facilitate Advisory Group Operations and Meetings: DPR will provide the meeting location (may be virtual) and staffing to facilitate the meeting, including providing a chairperson and will provide the meeting agenda and meeting summary or recording. The meeting information will be posted on DPR’s website and made available to the public. DPR will also offer logistical support to facilitate SPARC meetings and activities, ensuring that meetings and materials are accessible to the public, and providing language access support as requested.
7. Consider and Respond to Information and Recommendations from SPARC: DPR will consider and review the SPARC’s input and recommendations. DPR may adopt a recommendation, adapt a recommendation, or decide to not implement a recommendation based on DPR’s available resources, feasibility, and alignment with its mission, strategic objectives, legal authorities, and other factors. DPR will provide updates to SPARC on recommendations received. The DPR Director will make the final decision on how DPR will address SPARC’s input and recommendations.