December 18, 2025

Yana Garcia, Secretary
California Environmental Protection Agency
1001 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Secretary Yana Garcia,

In accordance with the State Leadership Accountability Act (Leadership Accountability), the Department of Pesticide Regulation submits this report on the review of our internal control and monitoring systems for the biennial period ending December 31, 2025.

Should you have any questions please contact Christina Bugai, Deputy Director, at (916) 650-6957, Christina.Bugai@cdpr.ca.gov.

GOVERNANCE

Mission and Strategic Plan

The Department of Pesticide Regulation's (DPR) mission is to protect human health and the environment by fostering sustainable pest management and regulating pesticides. As part of its mission, the Department envisions pest management that is safe, effective, and sustainable for all Californians and our environment. DPR's strategic plan outlines measurable goals and objectives to support increased access to sustainable pest management alternatives, improved timelines for evaluating pesticide risks, strengthened statewide enforcement, and increased transparency into the department's priorities and decision-making.

Goal #1: Increase Access to Safe, Effective, Sustainable Pest Management. DPR seeks to advance pest management approaches in both agricultural and urban contexts that promote human health and safety, ecosystem resilience, community well being, and agricultural and economic vitality.

1. Develop public and private partnerships and collaborations for implementing sustainable pest management.

2. Improve timeliness and transparency of science-based evaluation and registration of pesticide products.

3. Develop and implement a science-based prioritization process for reviewing, identifying and evaluating high-risk pesticides, their alternatives and related mitigation measures.

4. Facilitate and support sustainable pest management technical assistance and innovation in pest management in collaboration with interested parties.

Goal #2: Track, Evaluate, and Enforce Safe Pesticide Use. DPR will prioritize data collection and enforcement in disproportionately-impacted agricultural and urban areas, enhance the capacity of state and county enforcement programs, and strengthen relationships with all interested parties to inform department priorities and actions.

1. Enhance and modernize DPR's collection of information and data to improve program policies, procedures, and priorities.
2. Enhance California's statewide regulatory capacity.
3. Enhance statewide enforcement of pesticide sales laws.
4. Improve worker safety by increasing awareness and reducing potential for pesticide exposure.

Goal #3: Foster Engagement, Collaboration and Transparency. To expand accessibility to DPR's programs, policies, and research, the department will increase transparency into its data and information collection and decision-making, and work to strengthen relationships and collaborations with all interested parties.

1. Broaden opportunities for regular, transparent, and meaningful access to DPR to increase awareness of and inform department programs, decision-making and actions.
2. Improve information access and data sharing to increase transparency and awareness and understanding of California's pesticide regulatory structure and sustainable pest management approaches.
3. Launch a statewide system (SprayDays California) to provide the public with advance information about restricted material pesticide applications.
4. Expand language access throughout California in collaboration with federal, state and local interested parties.

Goal #4: Promote organizational Excellence and Innovation. DPR will continue to foster throughout its organization the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion, a sense of urgency and efficiency, and an embrace of change to increase innovative and effective approaches to the department's work.

1. Create and nurture a culture that supports and motivates excellence and professional development in workplace performance.
2. Increase organization efficiency and innovation.

Control Environment

DPR works actively to establish and maintain an effective control environment. DPR's management (which includes the executive team, branch chiefs, managers, and supervisors) accomplishes this goal by setting and modeling standards of ethics and integrity, setting and

communicating priorities, exercising executive-level oversight, and working within an organizational structure with assigned responsibilities, authority and staff accountability, and maintaining documentation of the control system.

The Department's top executives – Director Karen Morrison and Chief Deputy Director Leia Bailey – set priorities for and provide direction to department leadership, and exercise oversight of department operations. This executive leadership is coupled with a management level organizational structure to ensure appropriate levels of responsibility and authority are being exercised and that staff are held accountable. DPR maintains and documents an effective control system and complies with the State Leadership Accountability Act (SLAA).

DPR management focuses recruitment efforts on the Department's operational needs, priorities and values, including developing a workforce that reflects the diversity of the state. Management has designated specific employees from each branch to engage in DPR's Recruitment Workgroup led by the Department's Recruitment Specialist. The workgroup members attend various recruitment events, discuss recruitment strategies, and relay information to management regarding new, innovative ways to strengthen and focus recruitment efforts within each branch.

Management identifies, and lists as screening criteria, the required and desirable knowledge and skills for each vacancy during the hiring process. This process has been standardized departmentally and gives management tools to interview and select the most qualified candidates. Upon hire, all employees review and sign duty statements that outline their roles and responsibilities and the requirement that they exercise those roles and responsibilities ethically and with integrity. Management review of duty statements and staff expectations with new employees promotes a strong, competent workforce by documenting and demonstrating expected roles and responsibilities.

Management is committed to growing and developing the talent base within DPR through internal training, resulting in staff completion of a total of over 1,700 training hours this year. Additionally, the Human Resources Branch (HRB) has an ongoing Consultation Program, which gives managers the chance to ask questions and bring up HR-specific topics to discuss and obtain guidance on. The meetings allow HRB to provide ongoing guidance and helps foster relationships between HRB and management to support one another. DPR also utilizes coaching and mentoring trainers where individual plans are created for specific employees to build upon individual strengths and overcome challenges.

Management evaluates staff performance by reviewing their work with an annual performance appraisal which management is required to submit to the HRB as well as holding regular check-in meetings. The manager/supervisor training held by HRB instructs management to consistently engage with their employees and develop the most effective, individual strategies to ensure their staff feel supported and are able to be productive. When

holding staff accountable for their duties and deadlines, management is instructed to assist staff in prioritizing their workloads and be flexible when there is a need to re-evaluate and/or re-prioritize due to unreasonable and/or excessive pressures.

The Department provides reports and updates to the SLAA Report biannually, performs ongoing monitoring throughout the year, and tracks important meetings and dates throughout the SLAA process.

Information and Communication

DPR uses multiple channels of communication to ensure meaningful, accurate information is communicated internally and externally. DPR convenes weekly executive team meetings, monthly management team meetings, quarterly manager and supervisor meetings, biweekly branch chief meetings, quarterly all staff meetings, and individual branch meetings as needed, to convey information throughout the department. DPR also uses various weekly and monthly meetings within CalEPA to raise issues and focus on objectives relevant to the Agency as a whole. These channels of communication ensure that relevant and necessary information is transmitted internally in an effective and timely manner throughout the year. Additionally, DPR utilizes internal email notifications, a quarterly internal newsletter, and town hall/lunch and learn meetings to provide any relevant information to staff as it relates to information technology, human resources, and fiscal matters, and to answer questions. DPR also subscribes to numerous communications lists and attends multiple interagency forums to stay up to date and aware of any changes that would affect the Department. These include updates from control agencies (e.g., Department of Technology, Department of Human Resources, State Controller's Office, and Department of General Services) and partner agencies (e.g., Natural Resources Agency and Department of Food and Agriculture).

DPR shares important information with its stakeholders through a variety of means. The most general source of information is the department's website, which provides news updates and reports data and other information. DPR distributes information through its various listservs in order to directly reach stakeholders and uses social media to additionally inform various audiences about the Department's work. DPR also regularly hosts meetings with partner and stakeholder groups, including the County Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, and industry representatives, to provide opportunities for partners and stakeholders to raise concerns and opportunities, provide feedback, identify priorities and ask questions, and for the department to share updates on its activities and priorities. DPR also convenes several standing advisory committees that advise the department on a variety of issues, including pesticide application and professional licensing, regulatory development, risk mitigation, grant programs, and environmental justice.

The Department also provides mechanisms for employees to report impropriety within DPR and/or, inefficiencies and inappropriate actions to management and other decision makers. DPR is able to provide this through the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Program led by DPR's EEO Officer. The EEO Officer is available to speak with employees to provide guidance and/or gather information to ensure that inappropriate actions are properly and thoroughly investigated. The EEO Officer works to ensure that all DPR employees' behavior is consistent with the Department's EEO policies to provide a safe and comfortable working environment. These policies include the EEO Administrative Directive, the No Harassment Administrative Directive and the Workplace Violence and Bullying Prevention Administrative Directive. The Department also utilizes the Health and Safety Suggestion Form, which gives employees the opportunity to make suggestions and recommendations concerning health and safety in the workplace. DPR also provides and requires mandatory Workplace Violence and Bullying Prevention Training (annually and upon hire) and Equal Employment Opportunity/Harassment Prevention Training (biennially and upon hire).

Due to the efforts of DPR's Employee Engagement Workgroup, and with support from executive leadership, the Department has established an anonymous feedback portal to encourage open and honest communication. The portal provides all employees an avenue for providing feedback on branch or department-wide policies, procedures, informal practices, etc.; ongoing or proposed departmental changes or initiatives; recent announcements or department events; or other similar topics that may be relevant.

The multiple channels available for conveying information to both internal and external parties, as well as employees having the ability to report any improper behavior, provides a healthy flow of communication and information throughout DPR.

MONITORING

The information included here discusses the entity-wide, continuous process to ensure internal control systems are working as intended. The role of the executive monitoring sponsor includes facilitating and verifying that the Department of Pesticide Regulation monitoring practices are implemented and functioning. The responsibilities as the executive monitoring sponsor(s) have been given to: Leia Bailey, Chief Deputy Director.

DPR engages in operational planning to establish and maintain effective internal control systems and evaluates the effectiveness of those systems using both routine and periodic reviews. The DPR operational planning process allows the Department to collect and communicate relevant and reliable information needed for operational, programmatic, and financial decision making. The Department's branch-specific operational plans specify key performance goals selected from branch and executive office plans that will be conducted

during a fiscal year. These goals that the Department identifies are classified into four types of work that are organized by their predictability and expected timeline of completion. The four primary types of work are routine, troubleshooting, special projects, and initiatives, including tracking progress to meeting the Department's strategic plan goals. DPR management uses these proposed goals and categories of work to establish tasks that need to be monitored on an ongoing basis.

The operational planning process begins in November with an executive management meeting to identify potential near-term and longer-range planning issues. Meetings to discuss the Director's and department's priorities, expectations, and strategic plan objectives and goals for the upcoming fiscal year follow in February and March. From March through May, DPR develops draft operational plans which identify performance goals, as well as specific staff responsible for accomplishing those goals within a desired timeline. Operational plans are finalized in June. Upon completion, each operational plan provides guidance and is used as a reference for support in monitoring throughout the year.

In an effort to mitigate security risks, DPR's information security team manages an information security risk register. The team meets with information asset owners on a monthly basis to add new risks, review risk status, and plan mitigation. The Chief Information Officer (CIO) is provided with at least quarterly updates, or more frequently if risk level requires. DPR plans to initiate annual reviews of the information security risk register, so the CIO can keep the Executive Team informed of high-risk items.

For medium or high information security risks, the information security team collaborates with Information Technology Branch partners and appropriate stakeholders to develop mitigation actions to reduce or eliminate risks. Examples of mitigation measures include: conducting security awareness training, reviewing new artificial intelligence tools, phishing testing and training, and using hardware and software based security best practices or countermeasures.

DPR is also able to rely on knowledgeable internal auditing staff as well as external control agency audits for periodic and detailed reviews. Additionally, DPR utilizes executive management, middle management, and frontline management to monitor the progress of their staff to identify vulnerabilities. When expectations are not met with internal controls, DPR management addresses vulnerabilities and adjusts the internal control system as needed. This process is achieved by performing, documenting, and measuring the control against an expected result. If that result is not attained, then it is determined that the internal control requires changes.

RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The following personnel were involved in the Department of Pesticide Regulation risk assessment process: executive management, and middle management.

The following methods were used to identify risks: brainstorming meetings, employee engagement surveys, ongoing monitoring activities, audit/review results, and questionnaires.

The following criteria were used to rank risks: likelihood of occurrence, potential impact to mission/goals/objectives, timing of potential event, and tolerance level for the type of risk.

RISKS AND CONTROLS

Risk: Organizational Change Management

DPR is in the process of strengthening and supplementing its existing programs in order to support the wide scale adoption of sustainable pest management and advance the Department's mission and vision. This includes expansion of department staff and responsibilities through the 2024 State Budget and companion bill AB2113 (Chapter 60, statutes of 2024), and implementation of milestones of the updated 2024-2028 Strategic Plan. These initiatives will lead to process changes for all department programs and branches. It will be critical to establish a clear organizational change management strategy to ensure that any changes are implemented at a sustainable pace and the department is able to transition thoughtfully considering both staff and stakeholder impacts.

Control: Coaching/Leadership/Change Management Training

DPR has hired a consultant to help determine and implement change action, shepherding the change using known change engagement models and coaching members of the Executive Committee through this process. The process for determining the change action will require understanding the parameters of the change, including the breadth and depth, stakeholders impacted and involved, the roles of the team members, dependencies, timeline,

perceived obstacles, and solutions. By using a successful change engagement model, it will assist the various stakeholders in understanding the need for the change, ensuring they have the skills and ability to change, and reinforcing the change. The model will be multifunctional and will also be used to coach the Executive Committee during the implementation phase. This will have a positive impact on their approach, communication, and support of employees during the turbulence caused by the change, with the expectation that it will increase the overall connectivity and effectiveness of implementation.

Control: Staff Engagement/Feedback

DPR has implemented multiple avenues for staff to provide candid feedback to leadership, through the use of an anonymous feedback portal, as well as in-person and virtual listening sessions conducted by executive leadership. The feedback portal has allowed staff to give honest thoughts and feelings regarding a variety of subjects, including departmental culture, departmental changes, and process-level considerations. More recently, listening sessions have provided leadership with hundreds of individual points of feedback, many focused on staff's perceptions of the impact of change at the Department. In addition, the Employee Engagement workgroup, comprised of volunteers from all levels and functional areas of DPR, has consistently monitored staff feedback, survey data, and general departmental "chatter" to inform leadership of risk factors surrounding change initiatives, and recommend communication strategies or other solutions.

Risk: Staff Recruitment and Retention

DPR has made it a priority to examine recruitment efforts and monitor staffing levels to determine departmental hiring needs, including succession planning. DPR remains dedicated to hiring a qualified and diverse workforce while ensuring the development

of existing talent. However, due to a variety of factors, it has been challenging to find qualified candidates to fill vacancies for a few of DPR's complex and specialized roles, specifically for positions that require very specific skillsets, such as industrial hygienists and information technology network engineers. Additionally, DPR has lost key staff due to retirements, promotional opportunities outside of the Department, and increasing workload demands. The loss of key staff risks the loss of needed capacity and valuable expertise, knowledge, institutional history, and in-depth understanding of tasks and programs. Collectively, these pressures put the department at risk of failing to complete priority projects, missing important deadlines, and burning out existing staff. These risks will negatively affect operational flow. DPR will continue to prioritize recruitment and retention and seek new ways to mitigate these risks.

Control: Internal and External Recruitment Outreach

The Recruitment Specialist has developed a survey and set of interview questions to gather recruitment-related information from current DPR employees. The survey responses and interviews have helped the Recruitment Specialist identify schools, programs, and organizations for DPR to work with for recruitment purposes, and the Recruitment Specialist has contacted many of these entities to discuss upcoming events and potential ways to partner in recruiting efforts. The Recruitment Specialist holds quarterly meetings with representatives from other Boards, Departments, and Offices (BDOs) within CalEPA to discuss recruitment and to identify other groups and organizations for DPR to connect with. The BDOs also work together to host a couple CalEPA Recruitment Fairs throughout the year. Additionally, the Recruitment Specialist independently researches other schools, groups, and organizations to partner with on an ongoing basis to continually increase recruitment efforts. DPR has also aimed to increase efforts to reach more diverse groups and has developed a DEI recruitment database to help keep track of diverse organizations DPR can contact for recruitment and outreach purposes. The Recruitment Specialist has also developed a list of diverse organizations that DPR can share its job postings with and contacts these organizations each time DPR has new job opportunities. Additionally, the Recruitment Specialist has developed a recruitment newsletter that is sent to potential candidates on an ongoing basis. This newsletter is designed to share current job opportunities with interested individuals. The Recruitment Specialist

also continues to look for career fairs and recruiting events that DPR can participate in. All of these efforts contribute to the Department's goal to find more efficient and effective ways to recruit and have helped DPR reach more qualified, diverse candidates.

Control: Knowledge Transfer

To combat the negative effects of attrition, DPR has started to take a closer look at succession planning, specifically how the Department can bolster knowledge transfer within DPR's programs. DPR's Succession Planning survey is sent out annually to identify successes as well as what challenges programs are facing. The HRB has met with branches who have identified obstacles to discuss their challenges and is looking into what resources, in addition to CalHR's Succession Management Model, can be provided to programs to assist and support. HRB's Classification and Pay Unit and Recruitment Specialist continue to meet with branch chiefs on a quarterly basis to discuss succession planning efforts.

Control: Monitoring/Tracking

Monitoring and tracking workload and delays. Prioritizing tasks and streamline processes and communicate the limitations to stakeholders. As well as focusing on efficiencies when feasible, that includes ways to improve existing processes.

CONCLUSION

The Department of Pesticide Regulation strives to reduce the risks inherent in our work and accepts the responsibility to continuously improve by addressing newly recognized risks and revising risk mitigation strategies as appropriate. I certify our internal control and monitoring systems are adequate to identify and address current and potential risks facing the organization.

Karen Morrison, Director

CC: California Legislature [Senate, Assembly]
      California State Auditor
      California State Library
      California State Controller
      Director of California Department of Finance
      Secretary of California Government Operations Agency