

Meet the Scientific Prioritization and Review Committee (SPARC) Members



On April 2, 2026, the California Department of Pesticide Regulation's (DPR) Director appointed 12 members to serve on DPR's Scientific Prioritization and Review Committee (SPARC). Committee members will advise the department on prioritizing actions associated with continuous evaluation and mitigation.

Members (in alphabetical order):



1. **Kari Arnold, Ph.D.** (SPARC expertise: Agricultural Academic Extension) — *Associate Director, IR-4 Western Region/UC Davis*: Previously as a UC Cooperative Extension Orchard Advisor, and currently as Associate Director of IR-4 in the Western Region, Dr. Arnold works closely with agricultural specialty crop growers, UC extension academics, regulatory agencies, and pesticide registrants to find pest management solutions, determine research needs, and coordinate residue, crop safety, and efficacy studies for national and state registration. Dr. Arnold holds a Qualified Applicator License and currently serves as an alternate member representing UC IR-4 on DPR's Pesticide Registration and Evaluation Committee.



2. **Asa Bradman, Ph.D.** (SPARC expertise: Public Health, Environmental, and Urban Practitioner) — *Professor – Public Health Department & Professor – Environmental Systems Graduate Group, UC Merced*: Dr. Bradman is a public health scientist who has over 35 years of broad experience working on pesticide exposure and public health issues in California. Some of his experience includes work on the McFarland Cancer Cluster, pesticide exposure and risk assessment for the Mediterranean fruit fly aerial malathion spraying programs in the 1990s, pesticide exposure studies including biomonitoring, providing pesticide safety training and education, and assessing dietary exposure to pesticides. He also served on the USDA National Organic Standards Board from 2017-2022. Dr. Bradman co-founded the Center for Environmental Research & Children's Health (CERCH) at UC Berkeley and helped lead a team with UCSF that received a DPR Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Innovator award for work conducted as part of a 2012 DPR Alliance Grant promoting IPM in California childcare facilities.



3. **Staci Cibotti, Ph.D.** (SPARC expertise: Environmental and Ecotoxicology) — *Pesticide Program Specialist, Xerces Society*: Dr. Cibotti is an entomologist with the Xerces Society, an international nonprofit dedicated to invertebrate conservation. She has expertise in environmental exposures and risks from pesticides to non-target pollinators in agricultural and urban settings. She works with land managers throughout California to develop strategies that mitigate pesticide exposure risks for pollinators and other beneficial insects. She holds a PhD in Entomology from the Pennsylvania State University, with training in environmental toxicology, ecophysiology, and chemical ecology. Her work includes peer-reviewed

publications, development of grower guidance, and delivery of applicator and pest control adviser trainings. She also collaborates with diverse stakeholders, including state and federal wildlife and conservation agencies, to advance pollinator and beneficial insect conservation.



4. **Chris Geiger, Ph.D.** (SPARC expertise: Urban Practitioner)

— Dr. Geiger has worked in the field of integrated pest management (IPM) and applied ecology for over 30 years, and is a recipient of the DPR’s IPM Lifetime Achievement Award. He recently served as a member of the California Sustainable Pest Management Working Group, which completed California’s Sustainable Pest Management Roadmap in 2023. From 2003 to 2022, Chris managed the City of San Francisco’s IPM Program, where he worked with City affordable housing developers to incorporate pest preventive design features into 3,500 renovated apartment units. Chris had previously led an interdisciplinary, national committee to develop the Pest Prevention By Design Guidelines, a compendium of tactics for designing pests out of buildings, as well as the Pest Prevention By Design Guidelines for Landscapes. At San Francisco’s Department of the Environment, Chris led the rollout of the City’s sustainable purchasing program, set up and managed a pesticide reporting database for City properties, served as a founding board member of the Bay Friendly Landscaping & Gardening Coalition, organized a voluntary ban on the sale of high-risk rodent baits to consumers (“Don’t Take the Bait”), and presided over 19 years of monthly IPM Technical Advisory Committee trainings. Prior to that, he worked with DPR in its roll out of the Healthy Schools Act, conducted on-farm IPM research with the UC Berkeley, created the state’s first virtual IPM course with the UC SAREP program, and led a pesticide reduction program for H’mong hill farmers in northern Thailand with Save the

Children-US. Dr. Geiger was trained in insect ecology and entomology at UC Berkeley.



5. **Beau Howard** (SPARC expertise: Agricultural Practitioner) — *District Manager, JG Boswell Company*: Mr. Howard is an agricultural practitioner who currently manages a large production farm with diverse crops. He has over 19 years of experience as a licensed Pest Control Adviser (PCA) working on issues such as innovative crop protection research, agriculture sustainability, and stakeholder engagement. As a PCA, he has conducted field evaluations and provided guidance on pest control solutions and IPM strategies for a variety of crops. Mr. Howard regularly collaborates with industry, regulatory, and research organizations to advance agricultural practices.



6. **Olukayode Jegede, Ph.D.** (SPARC expertise: Ecotoxicology, Environmental, and Human Health Toxicology) — *Assistant Professor of Cooperative Extension for Agricultural Toxicology*: As an academic Ecotoxicologist, Dr. Jegede has conducted extensive research on environmental impacts of pesticides, in particular, their effects on the soil ecosystem. He recently published a comprehensive prioritization methodology for pesticide mixtures. Dr. Jegede was also a member of a consortium of researchers in Europe that worked on human and environmental risk assessment of pesticide mixtures. In 2023, he organized a United Nations General Assembly session on linking human and environmental health risks to pesticide residues. As an Extension Specialist, he also conducts research, interacts with agricultural stakeholders, and educates the public about safe use of agrochemicals, especially pesticides.



7. **Chow-Yang Lee, Ph.D.** (SPARC expertise: Urban Academic Extension) — *Professor and Endowed Presidential Chair in Urban Entomology, UC Riverside*: Dr. Lee's 30-year career has been devoted to understanding, managing, and mitigating the public-health and environmental risks posed by urban and structural pests. As a researcher and professor in urban entomology, Dr. Lee has extensive knowledge in the biology and management of structural and urban insect pests. His research team recently described *Reticulitermes rusti*, a new subterranean termite species that can be found across Southern California, improving understanding of the region's termite complex and its implications for structural-pest management, and has also documented multiple introductions of the highly invasive Formosan subterranean termite, *Coptotermes formosanus*, in California, which helped to inform surveillance and regulatory response strategies. DPR awarded Dr. Lee two separate research grants in 2021 and 2025, both for research on safer alternatives for controlling German cockroaches, a major indoor public health pest.



8. **Kelly Moran, Ph.D.** (SPARC expertise: Public Drinking Water Utilities, Wastewater Utilities, Environmental, and Ecotoxicology) — Dr. Moran has decades of experience in the scientific, regulatory, and policy space of emerging contaminants, including pesticides. Since 1993 she has worked in the municipal wastewater and stormwater utility fields and has extensive work addressing pesticides in municipal stormwater runoff, drinking water, and wastewater systems. She is familiar with the federal and California pesticide regulatory framework and has served on several statewide governmental committees and advisory groups, including most recently being a member of the Urban Subgroup of the Sustainable Pest Management (SPM) Workgroup.



9. **Sascha Carsten Thomas Nicklisch, Ph.D.** (SPARC expertise: Ecotoxicology, Environmental, and Human Health Toxicology) — *Associate Professor of Environmental Toxicology & Associate Environmental Chemist – Agricultural Experiment Station, UC Davis*: Dr. Nicklisch is an environmental toxicologist at UC Davis whose research explores how pesticides and environmental contaminants interact with biological defense mechanisms across multiple organisms. His lab investigates multidrug-resistance ABC transporter proteins, key molecular gatekeepers that regulate chemical uptake and elimination in all organisms, including pollinators, parasitic mites, marine fish, and humans. A major focus of his work is pollinator health: he studies how pesticide mixtures affect honey bee colonies and how acaricide resistance develops in Varroa destructor mites, with the goal of improving treatment efficacy while minimizing chemical burden. His research also spans micro- and nanoplastics toxicology, chemical bioaccumulation in food organisms, and environmental health. Dr. Nicklisch is committed to translating fundamental science into evidence-based policy and sustainable pest management practices.



10. **Jhalendra Rijal, Ph.D.** (SPARC expertise: (Agricultural Academic Extension) — *Integrated Pest Management Advisor, University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources/Cooperative Extension Integrated Pest Management Advisor, UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE)*: As an IPM Advisor, Dr. Rijal is an agricultural academic extension specialist. He focuses his UC Extension work in the San Joaquin Valley, specializing on pests in almonds, walnut, pistachio, peach and cherry. He has experience in directing pest management research projects, managing invasive pests, and developing IPM-decision support tools. DPR awarded Dr. Rijal a research grant in 2025 for developing cultural and biological-based practices for

managing Navel Orangeworm and invasive Carpophilus Beetle in almond and pistachio orchards. He currently also serves on DPR's Agricultural Pest Control Advisory Committee as a member on behalf of UC Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR).



- 11. Hillary Q. Thomas, Ph.D.** (SPARC expertise: Agricultural Practitioner and Agricultural Academic Extension) — *Research & Technical Director, Naturipe Berry Growers, Inc.*: Dr. Thomas-Sanchez is an agricultural research director with over 20 years of experience advancing science-based integrated pest management in California specialty crop systems. Trained in entomology at the University of California, Davis, her work focuses on whole-system pest management, including biological and mechanical controls, resistance management, fumigant alternatives, and reduced-risk pest control tools. She has led applied research programs generating commercial-scale data to inform regulatory decision-making, mitigation strategies, and pest management alternatives that reduce risks to farmworkers, communities, and the environment. Dr. Thomas Sanchez previously managed the research department at the California Strawberry Commission and served as a California Council on Science and Technology Fellow. She was a peer reviewer for CCST's statewide fumigant alternatives study and has served on California Department of Pesticide Regulation's Pest Management Advisory Committee. She brings experience as both an agricultural practitioner and in agricultural academic research.



12. **Jess Tyler** (SPARC expertise: Environmental) — *Staff Scientist, Center for Biological Diversity Staff Scientist, Center for Biological Diversity*. Mr. Tyler is an environmental scientist at the non-profit Center for Biological Diversity (CBD). His work has focused on reviewing pesticide risk assessments, registration review decisions, and biological evaluations for risks to Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed species. He has advocated for mitigation strategies to protect listed and non-listed species and has assisted US EPA's efforts to create Pesticide Use Limitation Areas (based on listed species ranges to designated areas where pesticide use limitation is most needed to reduce risk to ESA-listed species). Mr. Tyler also has some conventional agricultural practitioner experience, as a pesticide handler and applicator, on his family's farm.