

Meeting Minutes - DRAFT  
CONTRA COSTA COUNTY  
Decision-Making Subcommittee of the  
Integrated Pest Management Advisory Committee

**Thursday August 21, 2025**

**10:00 AM**

2380 Bisso Lane, Concord  
<https://zoom.us/j/97982014544>

Members Present: Carlos Agurto (Chair), Susanna Thompson, Gabriel Chan, Michelle Cordis

Members Absent: Andrew Sutherland

Others Present: Matt Slattengren, Wade Finlinson, Carolyn Whitesell

1. Convene and Introductions

*The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM.*

2. Public comment on items not on this agenda.

*Susanna Thompson noted that questions regarding vegetation issues along County roads were recently raised at a community wildfire meeting in El Cerrito.*

3. CONSIDER approval of the May 15, 2025 and July 17, 2025 IPM Decision-Making Subcommittee meeting minutes.

*A motion was made and seconded (CA/ST) to approve the May 15, 2025 minutes as presented.*

*Ayes: Chan, Thompson, Cordis, Agurto*

*Noes: None*

*Abstain: None*

*Absent: Sutherland*

*A motion was made and seconded (CA/ST) to approve the July 17, 2025 minutes as corrected.*

*Ayes: Chan, Thompson, Cordis, Agurto*

*Noes: None*

*Abstain: None*

*Absent: Sutherland*

*Public speakers: None*

4. REVIEW proposed draft revisions of the ground squirrel decision document and CONSIDER approval with suggested edits.

*The Subcommittee reviewed the updated draft and discussed additional revisions. A motion was made and seconded (ST/GC) to approve document with proposed edits.*

*Ayes: Chan, Thompson, Cordis*

*Noes: None*

*Abstain: Agurto*

*Absent: Sutherland*

*Public speakers: None*

*The final document approved by the full Committee on September 18, 2025 is attached to this record.*

5. REVIEW the grazing decision tree and ADVISE staff on possible revisions.

*The IPM Coordinator introduced the item by noting that the document created in 2015 only applied to flood control parcels managed by the Maintenance Division and primarily focused on hired herds of goats and sheep targeting certain site priorities. The document does not mention the process for considering traditional cattle grazing leases which are also used within various County operations.*

*Subcommittee members made the following comments:*

- There are a number of different objectives for sites. Some areas may be suitable for intensive grazing and others may require more sensitivity in order to be good land managers. It's also important to balance timing, cost, herd availability, and wildfire threats.*
- Targeted herds of sheep and goats tend to be nimbler than cattle, but local demand continues to drive up costs for targeted services.*
- Cattle leases are a minor revenue source, but fencing and other infrastructure needs to be in place. Many County parcels may be too small for cattle, but properties near other land grazed by cattle should be considered.*
- The movement of herds is usually the costliest consideration, and the transportation process tends to be a source of stress for animals.*
- Grazing service providers prefer to work with multiple landowners in a given area in order to limit transportation. Joint procurement with adjacent property owners for these services should be explored.*
- Facilities Services has recently increased the number of sites grazed by goats and sheep.*
- Grazing is associated with a variety of co-benefits including wildfire prevention and native species preservation.*
- Virtual fencing may be a viable consideration for some sites.*
- The current decision tree has a heavy emphasis on mechanical abatement of vegetation issues. There are wildfire, cost, and ecological risks associated with an over-reliance on*

*mechanical methods. There are many situations where mechanical tactics are the best possible strategy. Whenever there is a possibility to mimic natural systems for long-term management, it is worth considering.*

- *We may not need another decision tree or to update this one. The creation of specific recommendations may have a better impact.*
- *County operations have informal processes in place for targeted grazing services that consider weather patterns, geography, herd availability, and other factors. The grazing decision tree does not appear to be incorporated in current decision-making of any County department.*
- *The County-owned sites currently grazed by cattle are near the Byron Airport, near the Marsh Creek dam and levees, and near North Gate Road in Walnut creek. The Marsh Creek Detention Facility (MCDF) property was grazed by cattle prior to 2017. Bringing cattle back to MCDF was strongly encouraged.*
- *A summary of grazing and wildfire on the MCDF parcel over the last decade was given.*
- *There's not much controversy around the broader grazing decision-making, but there are sites that would benefit from grazing that are not currently being grazed.*

*No formal action was taken. The IPM Coordinator proposed holding off revising the document for now in order to focus on evaluating grazing at MCDF and identify opportunities to expand grazing operations to other applicable sites. There was some discussion about potentially having a meeting of the full Committee on the topic and invite subject matter experts from UC to participate.*

*Public Speakers: None*

6. REVIEW commensal rodent and gopher management decision documents and DETERMINE whether there is interest in revising the documents and ADVISE staff on the preferred process for making revisions.

*The commensal rodent and Livorna Park rat documents were briefly discussed, but the item was tabled due to insufficient time. No formal action was taken.*

7. PLAN October 16, 2025 Meeting

*Suggested items included reviewing the rodent and gopher documents.*

*Attachments:*

*Decision Documentation for Ground Squirrel Management (revised 9/18/25)*

The meeting adjourned at 11:56 AM.