

California Air Resources Board

Notice of Public Meeting to Consider San Joaquin Valley Agricultural Burning Assessment

The California Air Resources Board (CARB or Board) will conduct a public meeting at the date and time noted below to consider the San Joaquin Valley Agricultural Burning Assessment.

DATE: February 25, 2021

TIME: 9:00 A.M.

Please see the public agenda which will be posted ten days before the February 25, 2021, Board Meeting for any appropriate direction regarding a possible remote-only Board Meeting. If the meeting is to be held in person, it will be held at the California Air Resources Board, Byron Sher Auditorium, 1001 I Street, Sacramento, California 95814.

This item will be considered at a meeting of the Board, which will commence at 9:00 A.M., February 25, 2021, and may continue at 8:30 A.M., on February 26, 2021. Please consult the agenda for the meeting, which will be available at least ten days before February 25, 2021, to determine the day on which this item will be considered.

Background

To maintain healthy and productive operations, agriculture produces a significant amount of woody biomass every year through practices such as orchard and vineyard prunings and removals. Historically, the most cost-effective means of disposing of this biomass has been open agricultural burning. Emissions from open burning agricultural material, however, are significant, with potential implications for attaining air quality standards and impacts on local communities. In response to public health and air quality concerns, the legislature and local air quality regulators have taken actions to mitigate emissions associated with open agricultural burning.

Senate Bill (SB) 705 (Florez 2003) established a timeline for phasing out open agricultural burning in the San Joaquin Valley (Valley) by 2010, and, in response, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (District) and the agricultural industry have begun transitioning from open burning of agricultural materials to less polluting alternatives such as soil incorporation. However, under SB 705, the District can postpone the burn ban for some crop categories and materials if the District determines a postponement is necessary and CARB concurs with the District's determinations.

On December 17, 2020, the District adopted its 2020 Staff Report and Recommendations on Agricultural Burning (2020 Report), which includes recommendations for new agricultural burn prohibitions beyond those already in effect in the Valley and requests CARB concurrence on proposed postponement of burn prohibitions for remaining crop categories and materials. CARB's previous concurrence, granted for the District's 2015 determinations, expired on December 31, 2020. On January 3, 2021, CARB provided concurrence, for the limited period through February 24, 2021, with the postponement of the prohibition of agricultural burning where issues such as disease pose obstacles to implementing alternatives. In addition, CARB concurred, for the same limited period and with specified conditions, with the postponement of the prohibition of agricultural burning where the District and permit applicant can document that there is an immediate imperative to clear a field for planting.

The District has made considerable progress reducing agricultural burning since the passage of SB 705, and the 2020 Report is another significant step in the right direction. In particular, the District's Alternatives to Agricultural Open Burning Incentive Pilot Program, since its inception in November 2018, has borne out the concept of soil incorporation and highlighted the important role incentives play in making alternatives accessible to Valley agricultural operators. CARB believes that partnerships between the District, CARB, other State and federal agencies, the agricultural industry, and Valley residents and other stakeholders can continue and accelerate this transformation, paving a viable path to near-complete phase-out of agricultural burning in the Valley by January 1, 2025.

Proposed Action

Recognizing the need for a transitional period, CARB staff recommend that the Board concur with the District's burn prohibition postponements as set forth in the 2020 Report through August 31, 2021, and that the Board delegate the Executive Officer the authority to provide concurrence for an additional period beyond the first six-month concurrence period, through January 1, 2025, provided that the District implement additional measures, with CARB support, with the aim of facilitating a swift phase-out of agricultural burning. Meeting a target of near-complete phase-out of agricultural burning will require a partnership between the District, CARB, other State and federal agencies, the agricultural industry, and Valley residents and other stakeholders that builds on the framework established in the District's 2020 Report. The approach includes two components: first, accelerated timelines—starting with large agricultural operations which are better able to absorb the costs of alternatives such as soil incorporation, while allowing more time for smaller agricultural operations to adjust—and second, a clear ton target for the near-complete phase-out of burning by January 1, 2025.

The recommendations may be obtained from CARB's website at <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/our-work/programs/agricultural-burning> on and after February 5, 2021. Because of current travel, facility, and staffing restrictions, the

California Air Resources Board's offices have limited public access. Please contact [Bradley Bechtold](#), Regulations Coordinator, if you need physical copies of the documents.

Interested members of the public may present comments orally or in writing at the meeting and may provide comments by postal mail or by electronic submittal before the meeting. To be considered by the Board, written comments not submitted during the meeting, must be received **no later than February 22, 2021**, and addressed to the following:

Postal mail: Clerks' Office, California Air Resources Board
1001 I Street, Sacramento, California 95814

[Electronic submittal](http://www.arb.ca.gov/lispub/comm/bclist.php): <http://www.arb.ca.gov/lispub/comm/bclist.php>

Please note that under the California Public Records Act (Government Code section 6250 et seq.), your written and oral comments, attachments, and associated contact information (e.g., your address, phone, email, etc.) become part of the public record and can be released to the public upon request.

CARB requests that written statements on this item be filed at least ten days prior to the meeting so that CARB staff and Board members have additional time to consider each comment. Further inquiries regarding this matter should be directed to Laura Carr, Air Pollution Specialist, Central Valley Air Quality Planning Section, at (916) 324-5931 or Sylvia Vanderspek, Chief, Air Quality Planning Branch, at (916) 324-7163.

Environmental Analysis

CARB has concluded the proposed concurrence is exempt from CEQA, as described in CEQA Guidelines §15061, because the action is both an Action Taken by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment (as described in CEQA Guidelines §15308 for "class 8" exemptions); and it is also exempt as described in CEQA Guidelines §15061(b)(3) ("common sense" exemption) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the proposed action may result in a significant adverse impact on the environment. A brief explanation of the basis for reaching this conclusion is included in the staff recommendations.

Special Accommodation Request

Consistent with California Government Code Section 7296.2, special accommodation or language needs may be provided for any of the following:

- An interpreter to be available at the meeting;
- Documents made available in an alternate format or another language; and
- A disability-related reasonable accommodation.

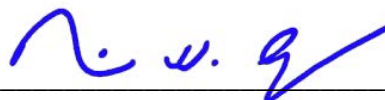
To request these special accommodations or language needs, please contact the Clerks' Office at cotb@arb.ca.gov or (916) 322-5594 as soon as possible, but no later than ten business days before the scheduled Board meeting. TTY/TDD/Speech to Speech users may dial 711 for the California Relay Service.

Consecuente con la sección 7296.2 del Código de Gobierno de California, una acomodación especial o necesidades lingüísticas pueden ser suministradas para cualquiera de los siguientes:

- Un intérprete que esté disponible en la audiencia;
- Documentos disponibles en un formato alterno u otro idioma; y
- Una acomodación razonable relacionados con una incapacidad.

Para solicitar estas comodidades especiales o necesidades de otro idioma, por favor llame a la oficina del Consejo al cotb@arb.ca.gov o (916) 322-5594 lo más pronto posible, pero no menos de diez días de trabajo antes del día programado para la audiencia del Consejo. TTY/TDD/Personas que necesiten este servicio pueden marcar el 711 para el Servicio de Retransmisión de Mensajes de California.

California Air Resources Board



Richard W. Corey
Executive Officer

Date: February 5, 2021

The energy challenge facing California is real. Every Californian needs to take immediate action to reduce energy consumption. For a list of simple ways you can reduce demand and cut your energy costs, see [CARB's website](http://www.arb.ca.gov) (www.arb.ca.gov).