

# Advancing Thriving Farmland



**DATE**  
Wednesday,  
1 July 2026



**LOCATION**  
Agriculture Education Center,  
University Farm,  
CSU Chico



**AUDIENCE**  
Farmers • Researchers •  
Policymakers • Funders

A convening of practitioners, scientists, landowners, and policy leaders to share evidence, accelerate adoption, and build coalitions around nature-based solutions that restore the health, productivity, and resilience of working farmland — from soil microbiomes to watershed recharge.

**SESSION TRACKS:**



Soil Health



Water



Policy & Finance



Biodiversity



Farmer Practice



Plenary



8:00 – 8:45 AM

**MORNING 1: ARRIVAL & REGISTRATION**

Arrival — Registration, Coffee, Networking & Poster Session



8:45 – 10:00 AM

**MORNING 2: OPENING PLENARY SESSION**

**Opening Plenary**

- Opening remarks by Secretary Karen Ross — framing the day's mission and the urgency of scaling nature-based solutions on working farmland. (10 mins)
- Scene Setting with Dr. Cindy Daley, Chico State: The evidence is clear; our task now is to scale implementation. (15 mins)
- Farmer Panel: Why, what, and the future — Three farmers share candid stories of adoption of climate-smart practices, what they did and why, and reflections on future challenges. Moderated by Secretary Wade Crowfoot. (50 mins)



10:00 – 10:15 AM

**BREAK — Coffee & Networking**



10:15 – 11:30 AM

**MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS**



**SOIL HEALTH**  
Holistic  
Farm Planning

How can California advance holistic, whole-farm planning? This discussion explores barriers related to technical assistance, funding access, cultural recognition, and long-term stewardship, featuring perspectives from grantees, providers, workforce practitioners, and tribal communities.



**BIODIVERSITY**  
Advancing Biodiversity and Agriculture 1: Overcoming Barriers to On-Farm Biodiversity Implementation

Panelists explore strategies to increase biodiversity while maintaining food safety, examine the economic and operational realities of implementation, and highlight the partnerships and resources needed to support long-term adoption and stewardship.



**POLICY & FINANCE**  
Funding the Transition: Navigating Barriers and Financing Pathways

Panelists demystify barriers and identify strategies for accessing public and private funding, technical assistance, and long-term implementation support across diverse farming operations and regions.



**WATER**  
Improving Watershed Management and Restoring Freshwater Ecosystems

Implementation-focused storytelling will highlight riparian restoration, buffer strips, and other healthy soils practices for improving water quality; and the cost and availability of technical assistance for this type of work. Speakers will share lessons learned and successful approaches for coordinating among landowners, conservation organizations, and agricultural operations.



**FARMER PRACTICE**  
Peer Networks and Demonstration Models for Scaling Adoption

Farmers and network leaders will share lessons on peer learning, trust-building, risk reduction, technical support, and regional collaboration that can help scale successful practices from pilot projects to broader implementation.



11:30 AM – 12:45 PM

**LUNCH & REGIONAL NETWORKING SESSIONS**

Enjoy lunch while connecting with colleagues from your region. Regional tables will be available to foster local collaboration.



12:45 – 2:00 PM

**AFTERNOON 1: BREAKOUT SESSIONS**



**SOIL HEALTH**  
From Planning to Implementation

Deep-dive workshop on practical implementation of soil health practices. Topics include practice selection, sourcing supplies, equipment access, maintenance, workforce needs, and operational strategies that support long-term adoption and successful implementation.



**BIODIVERSITY**  
Advancing Biodiversity and Agriculture 2: Scaling Regional and Statewide Implementation

Case studies highlighting approaches for advancing biodiversity and agriculture at the regional and state scale. Topics include regional habitat planning for species connectivity, native seed production and supply, repurposing opportunities under SGMA, and the technical, financial, and policy support needed to scale biodiversity practices across California landscapes.



**POLICY & FINANCE**  
Measuring What Matters: Soil Health Indicators, Monitoring, and Verification

Facilitated workshop exploring barriers and solutions to implementation of climate-smart agricultural practices, with a focus on improving producer access and financial rewards. Participants will examine challenges associated with monitoring, reporting, verification, and compliance requirements; and discuss strategies to reduce burdens and better align policies and incentives with on-farm realities.



**WATER**  
Soil Health and Water Quality: Implementation Pathways for Water Resilience

Panel discussion exploring the science and practical implementation of soil health practices that improve water quality and resilience on working lands. Topics include grower adoption, technical assistance, monitoring, regulatory alignment, and barriers to implementation, alongside strategies for integrating soil and water health goals through partnerships.



**FARMER PRACTICE**  
Regional Storytelling and Networking

Case-based discussion on effective scaling of climate-smart agricultural practices through regional coordination and community-based implementation. Partners, implementers, and funders will share lessons on coalition-building, grower engagement, technical assistance, and sustaining regional implementation networks.



2:00 – 2:15 PM

**BREAK — Coffee & Networking**



2:15 – 3:30 PM

**AFTERNOON 2: BREAKOUT SESSIONS**



**SOIL HEALTH**  
Compost Systems and Regional Implementation

Moderated discussion on challenges and opportunities related to compost production on farm, sourcing, transportation, quality standards, and on-farm application. Panelists will examine infrastructure, regulatory considerations, and strategies for expanding compost access and adoption across California agriculture.



**BIODIVERSITY**  
Sustainable Pest Management

Moderated panel examining whole-farm and neighboring-land approaches to sustainable pest management, including nature-based solutions that support biodiversity and ecological resilience. Discussion will focus on implementation barriers, grower coordination, technical assistance, and balancing production needs with long-term ecosystem health.



**POLICY & FINANCE**  
Policy Design for Regional Impact

Discussion focused on policies, planning frameworks, and institutional coordination needed to scale climate-smart agricultural practices across California working lands. Speakers will explore how climate action plans, conservation programs, land use planning, and incentives can better align to support durable and equitable adoption.



**WATER**  
Soil Health and SGMA

Panel discussion on implementing soil health practices that support groundwater sustainability and water-use efficiency under SGMA. Topics include adoption challenges, emerging science, technical assistance needs, and strategies for integrating soil health and groundwater management goals.



3:30 – 4:20 PM

**SESSION TRACK REPORT OUTS (50 minutes)**

Rapporteurs from each breakout track share key takeaways, implementation challenges, promising solutions, areas of agreement, and unresolved tensions that emerged throughout the day. Followed by a discussion focused on opportunities for continued coordination and action across California.



4:20 – 4:30 PM

**FINAL REFLECTIONS & ADJOURN (10 minutes)**

Secretary Karen Ross provides final reflections on key themes from the day, highlights opportunities for continued collaboration, and shares next steps for advancing implementation of nature-based and climate-smart agricultural solutions across California working lands.

