



Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting

July 22, 2025

A meeting of the Board of Directors, Citrus Research and Development Foundation, Inc. was held on Wednesday, July 22, 2025, via Zoom only. The meeting was properly noticed and recorded. President Morgan Porter called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM. Roll was called and a quorum was present. Board members present were Chris Gunter, Matt Machata, Trevor Murphy, Morgan Porter, Joby Sherrod, Sarah Spinosa, and Matt Story.

President Morgan Porter noted that the minutes from the June 11, 2025, Board meeting were included in their packet for review. Mr. Sherrod made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Machata and passed unanimously.

Public Comments: None.

Executive Committee: Did not meet.

Finance and Audit Committee: Audrey Nowicki presented the June 30, 2025, Financial Statement, which became the basis for the CRDF audit for FY 2024-25. Mr. Sal Tropea of Bunting, Tripp, and Ingley was at the CRDF offices July 8-11, 2025, to complete our audit. It is now in review, and the board should have a draft audit by the August meeting.

Audrey summarized CRDF spending for the previous year, noting that CRDF ended the year very close to what it had budgeted for new research.

The marketing order balance sheet was not complete as of June 30th. Final adjustments to Billings are being made, after which we will have an updated citrus marketing order balance.

The 2025-2026 budget considered by the board was updated to reflect the legislative appropriation of \$100 million for large-scale field trials. Mr. Machata made a motion that the Financial Statements be approved as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sherrod and passed unanimously.

Mr. Dantzler added that if everything is spent the way it is envisioned, CRDF will have only \$160,000 left at the end of the next fiscal year. This speaks again to how dependent we are on the annual legislative appropriation.

Governance Committee: Did not meet.

Plant Improvement Committee: Chair Joby Sherrod reported that the Plant Improvement Committee met on July 2, 2025, to consider a revision to two projects already approved, reducing the number of accessions to be field trialed from 90 to 68. Additional commercial groves were approved as new field trial sites, too. Mr. Sherrod moved to approve the new design of the Coca-Cola project. Mr. Machata seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Research Management Committee: Chair Matt Machata presented the report for the July 16, 2025, meeting as follows:

Mr. Dantzler announced that Buddy Strickland had retired after 50 years of dedication to the citrus industry, and CRDF would need to find a replacement for him on the committee.

Mr. Dantzler shared that he and Brandon had recently toured the Grove First test site at Fort Pierce and were very impressed. Clear separation between molecules is apparent. The goal has shifted from finding

molecules that work as well as OTC to finding those that work better than OTC. The PIs that are involved in the project are to be commended.

President Morgan McKenna then prefaced the discussion of Research Priorities by suggesting that the board discuss each item separately. She personally liked having a balance of directed research and an RFP. From a grower's perspective, she wants to focus on finding the tree of the future and also work on how to optimize injections or have other rotational partners.

Mr. Dantzler led the Research Priorities discussion. Mr. Dantzler consulted with Dr. Rogers, Dr. Adkins, and Yanni Lagos with Soilcea to assist in identifying research priorities for FY 2025-26. There was a lengthy staff meeting that led to the list, and it was captured in the memorandum which was provided in board materials.

1. Collaborate with Fundecitrus to get GM trees which repel psyllids into Florida for testing in our environment. If Fundecitrus would agree, perhaps a more efficient way of doing this would be to get the transformation construct with the gene from Brazil and have Dr. Zale transform it into Florida trees.
2. Consideration of the Dutt and Messina transgenic proposals. Staff will provide an update.

The Dutt project had been advanced from pre-proposal to full proposal status. Then, during the discussion of each of these projects, it was decided that it made sense to try to blend them together and come back with just one proposal.

The university is prepared to do this however we wish. Dantzler and Dr. Dutt spoke a few days ago and Dr. Dutt said that he and Dr. Messina had already begun blending the two projects and had it down to roughly half the cost of the two separately.

Within the context of the conversation about these proposals at the Research Management Committee was the idea of retaining the consulting services of Dr. Leandro Pena, perhaps the world leader in citrus biotechnology. This was embraced by the RMC. There was discussion by the board of Dr. Pena's role. Dantzler said he had shared the possibility with Drs. Messina, Angle, and Rogers and there was no objection. Ms. Porter was open to this but would like to have a scope of work in place.

3. Seek ways to accelerate pulling trees out of juvenility for germplasm needing this assistance.
4. Propagate at least 500 of Dr. Mou's GM trees which overexpress NPR1.
5. Prepare the DPI property in Dundee for a new GM tree field trial site, plus a site for conventionally bred germplasm which needs to be field trialed.
6. Populate the transgenic field trial site at Picos with new germplasm. Out with the old and in with the new.
7. Establish an antimicrobial peptide (AMP) test pipeline using Dr. Ping Duan's Clas culture system.
8. Increasing performance of OTC. Muriatic acid is not the optimal acidifier/adjuvant to stabilize OTC in tank mixes before injection or to facilitate distribution of OTC during and after injections. Adjuvants that are nonphytotoxic and protect OTC from oxidation are needed.
9. Protecting newly planted trees from Clas infection:
 - a. Individual protective covers (IPCs) have been demonstrated to protect trees from infection. Extending the period of protection has been achieved with brassinosteroids, which repel ACP and delay Clas transmission/infection.

- b. Another strategy is to maintain trees for longer durations under larger size IPCs.
- c. Installing IPCs has been used to rejuvenate previously unprotected trees by protecting them from debilitating ACP feeding damage.

These approaches are being explored by growers but none of them have been optimized in replicated research trials.

- 10. Jasmonic acid spray products have been used effectively on other crops to deal with bacterial infections. It has been suggested that this be tested on Clas and canker. There is no preliminary data.
- 11. Coordinated usage of PGRs and nutrition. This has been suggested, but horticultural factors cannot be managed apart from nutrition.
- 12. Assist in the mass propagation of the Soilcea GM rootstock. EPA has opened a 30-day comment period, so a decision may be forthcoming soon.

No objection to these research topics was expressed, although support for 10 and 11 was tepid at best.

Chair Matt Machata then explained the committee recommendation to fund L. Stelinski proposal 25-001, Assessing Susceptibility to Insecticides and Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus Prevalence in Asian Citrus Psyllid Field Populations in Florida with the addition of abamectin. Mr. Machata moved to approve funding. Mr. Sherrod seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The next topic was the Large-Scale Field Trials RFP: Mr. Dantzler explained the language, which tracked the language from previous years with updated language to reflect legislative proviso changes, new funding amounts, and the striking of paragraph 7 on page 3 to accommodate a request from CRAFT. Mr. Hall noted that CRAFT anticipates trying to streamline the data collection effort and the striking of paragraph 7 was in keeping with that new direction. Mr. Machata moved to approve. Ms. Spinosa seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Chair Machata brought to the board's attention the need to test resistance for the two leading Bt genes, suggesting that we ask

Mr. Dantzler confirmed that this would be a free-standing preproposal for consideration and that he has been in touch with Dr. Stelinski who suggested that a person in Dr. Qureshi's lab would be a good fit, and that with the board's consent he would begin these discussions. Mr. Machata made a motion to invite a preproposal. The motion was seconded by Ms. Spinosa and passed unanimously.

Mr. Dantzler said he spoke with Shannon Shepp at DOC about the problem that Silvec has with Chapter 601, and that she is not convinced that Silvec has a problem. Shannon will have a phone meeting with Raphael Simon from Silvec to discuss this. If not, we could just continue with the project that is already underway and finish out our funding obligation there. If Silvec does, in fact, have a problem, then we would have to find a way for him to pay the money back to CRDF and then consider its new proposal.

COO Report: None.

Partnership Updates: Dr. Gunter shared that the Crop Transformation Center was moving forward, the installation and setup of the containers is proceeding, and the remodeling of their support facilities is ongoing.

Steven Hall reported that Florida Citrus Mutual had just completed a successful event with Secretary Rollins. CRAFT's next cycle would begin early August, and they would start taking applications soon after. They would be using a streamlined model and moving to a per-tree application and payment basis.

New Business: None.

Public Comments: Cole Arrant gave his thanks and gratitude for the board funding his project working with Dr. Michelle Heck and Grove First. He asked the board if there were any specific molecules they would like for him to add for testing. Mr. Dantzler shared that testing leading molecules with citric acid would be good, as well as testing leading candidates in Ellenton so there would be two test sites, one on each side of the state. Cole was happy to comply.

Future Meeting: The next Board of Directors meeting will be held on August 26, 2025; location will be announced.

The meeting adjourned at 11:10 AM.

Minutes submitted by George Hamner, Secretary.