



CITRUS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION, INC.

Research Management Committee

Meeting Minutes

May 26, 2026

A meeting of the Research Management Committee of the Citrus Research and Development Foundation, Inc. was held on Tuesday, May 26, 2026, UF-IFAS-CREC, 700 Experiment Station Rd, Lake Alfred, FL 33850. The meeting was properly noticed and recorded. The meeting was called to order at 10:01 AM by Chairman Matt Machata. Roll was called and a quorum was present. Committee members participating were Dr. Scott Adkins, Bobby Barben, Bill Bohde, Dan Bott, Holly Chamberlain, Dr. John Davis, Deeley Hunt, Matt Machata, Charlie McKee, Riley McKenna, Aaron Nelson, Morgan Porter, Dr. Brian Scully, Shannon Shepp, and John Updike.

Mr. Machata stated that the April 21, 2026, Research Management Committee Meeting Minutes were included with the meeting materials. Ms. Shepp moved to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. McKee and passed unanimously.

Mr. Machata asked Mr. Dantzler to update the committee on available funding. Dantzler noted that CRDF had funding to fund the projects that were on the agenda. Had this year's projects been funded earlier in the year, CRDF would probably have been a little bit over budget; however, everything started late. Also, the RFP did not work out as well as hoped. It took a different direction and did not resolve itself until late in the fiscal year. Therefore, funding is available for projects that are meritorious and worthy of funding.

Chairman Machata began discussions with the Consideration of Off-Cycle Research Preproposals starting with M. Dutt 'Proactively Developing Transgenic Lines Stacked for Resistance to HLB'. Dr. Syvertsen presented the project summary. With a budget of \$50,000, this approach stacks three separate genes into mature trees to approach the HLB problem from the three different areas by simultaneously suppressing the Clas bacteria, reducing vector attraction and feeding activity, and also actively eliminating psyllids. Dr. Dutt was there to answer questions that arose. Dr. Scully inquired about the registration process, and Dr. Dutt noted that this project would obtain the base data that EPA would need to move forward. A motion was made by Ms. Shepp to recommend inviting a full proposal. The motion was seconded by Ms. Porter and passed unanimously.

The second preproposal was C. Baysal 'Virus-Mediated in Planta Genome Editing Platform for Accelerated Trait Discovery in Citrus'. Dr. Dawson presented the summary of the project, and Dr. Baysal provided some clarification on what the project would entail. Mr. Machata noted that there were concerns about the amount of viruses, so in a full proposal, Dr. Baysal could add some

justification on why he thinks they would be valid. A motion was made by Mr. McKee to recommend inviting a full proposal with the added justification. The motion was seconded by Ms. Porter and passed unanimously.

Mr. Machata continued with the Discussion and Recommendations of Full Research Proposals. N. Quinn 25-022 ‘Advancing Entomopathogenic...’ had been POSTPONED, so they moved on to A. Schultink, Fortiphyte 25-024 ‘Using the FIT3 Immune Receptor Gene to Generate HLB-Resistant Citrus for Florida’. Dr. Dawson presented a summary of the project. It was suggested that Dr. Schultink collaborate with a partner in Florida for HLB screening and inoculation assays and consider temperature stability of the immune receptor. Ms. Shepp made a motion to recommend funding. It was seconded by Mr. McKee and passed unanimously.

Discussion of M. Dutt 25-023 ‘Identification of Key Factors in Citrus Tolerance to HLB’ followed. The summary was presented by Dr. Graham. Ms. Porter noted that CRDF could not fund foreign travel. They were encouraged to sync with Dr. Yu Wang and use the genes that show strength that could be used for gene editing. Ms. Shepp made a motion to recommend funding. It was seconded by Mr. Barben and passed unanimously.

Mr. Machata continued with a proposal from Dr. C. Baysal 25-021 ‘Engineering Durable Citrus Tolerance to Huanglongbing via Rational Multi-Layer Defense Stacking’. Dr. Dawson summarized the project. The ultimate objective is to take transgenic plants and test them in greenhouses and labs to identify what should be field-tested. It was questioned why juvenile tissue transformation was being used first and whether it would be better to go straight to mature tissue transformation. Dr. Baysal was asked to submit a full proposal for the virus-mediated genome editing platform, including justification for the use of viral vectors. He should work with Mr. Dantzler to revise the budget for the multi-layer defense stacking project before the board meeting. Mr. Nelson made a motion to recommend funding dependent on the budget adjustment. The motion was seconded by Mr. McKee and passed unanimously.

Next was the B. Bonning 23-040 continuation, ‘Optimal Combination of Bt Toxins and Gene Silencing RNAs for Management of Citrus Root Weevil – Continuation’. Dr. Bonning was asked to revise the proposal for the Bt toxin project to prioritize ACP over Diaprepes and resubmit for board consideration by June 10th. Mr. McKenna brought forth the motion to recommend funding with the added prioritization that is needed. The motion was seconded by Ms. Porter and passed with only one no vote.

Last on the list was reconsideration of C. Messina (& A. Huo) 25-014 ‘Rapid Development of Transgene-Free, Phloem-Enhanced Valencia Sweet Orange for HLB Tolerance via Mature-Tissue CRISPR Editing’. Dr. Dawson gave the summary. The DMR6 is a gene that degrades salicylic

acid, so they are proposing to knock that out. The EDS1 is a gene that increases salicylic acid, so they are going to transform that. As a third step, they are going to do doubles. They are going to knock out the one gene and add the other gene in the same plant. Ms. Porter made a motion to recommend funding of this revised proposal. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hunt and passed unanimously.

The chairman asked Mr. Dantzler to give his report on Dr. Leandro Peña's visit to Florida.

Dr. Pena was with us for almost a week. He had an opportunity to visit personally with most of the researchers connected to the USDA and the University that were active in this space. He offered us guidance and ended up with a number of very clear recommendations.

Dr. Pena was able to tour the transgenic facility in Fort Pierce, where we have a lot of GM trees planted, and he was very impressed. He just wants more trees planted. He liked the conventional rootstock trials that we have underway.

Dr. Pena is a great resource. I learned an awful lot. He is essentially saying, "The most impactful thing you can do right now is kill psyllids. You should not stop with the oxytetracycline therapy." He has seen enough evidence that it is working to believe that we should continue. We should try to make that work even better if we can. Trying to minimize the number of hot psyllids in the grove is the next most impactful thing we can do to help growers get through this rough patch until we can get the trees of the future planted in the ground.

Ms. Porter, CRDF Board President, invited everyone who was not on the board to attend our board meeting Wednesday, June 10, 2026, at 2:30 PM, in Bonita Springs.

Being there was no Other Business or Public Comments, the meeting adjourned at 12:10 PM.