Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI)

Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program (ICARP)

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

October 24, 2025

SUMMARY

TAC Members Present:

- Sam Assefa, LCI
- Alex Ghenis, Accessible Climate Strategies
- Nathan Bengtsson, PG&E
- Roberto Carlos Torres, City and County of San Francisco
- Kim Clark, Southern California Association of Governments
- Melissa Boudrye, California Governor's Office of Emergency Services[1] (OES)
- Jonathan Parfrey, Climate Resolve
- Linda Helland, California Department of Public Health (CDPH)
- Denise Kadara, Allensworth Progressive Association (APA)
- David Loya, City of Arcata
- Nayamin Martinez, Central California Environmental Justice Network
- Jenn Phillips, California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA)[2]
- John Wentworth, Town of Mammoth Lakes
- Jaylen Tran, California State Transportation Agency[3]
- Nina Bingham, California Department of Food and Agriculture[4] (CDFA)

TAC Members Absent:

- Jacob Alvarez, City of Coachella
- Michelle Passero, The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- Sarah Izant, California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA)
- Grant Davis, Sonoma County Water Agency (Sonoma Water)
- Allison Brooks, Bay Area Regional Collaborative
- Will Madrigal, Jr., Climate Science Alliance
- Gloria Walton, The Solutions Project

Roll Call & Housekeeping

Sam Magill, Sacramento State University College of Continuing Education, reviewed the agenda and discussed meeting logistics for in person and online attendees. Elea Becker Lowe, LCI conducted a roll call. With 15 members present, a quorum was reached, and the meeting was called to order.

[1] Alternate for Robyn Fennig, California Office of Emergency Services

[2] Alternate for Amanda Hansen, California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA)

[3] Alternate for Darwin Moosavi, California Department of Transportation

[4] Alternate for Virginia Jameson, California Department of Food and Agriculture

Welcome and Meeting Blessing

LCI Director Sam Assefa thanked participants for attending and introduced Robert Jeff, Vice Chair of the Santa Rosa Rancheria of the Tachi Yokuts Tribe, for additional opening comments and a blessing for the meeting. Following the blessing, Jeff provided a Tribal song to honor the WoWo people who once lived on the local land, as well as those who came after them.

Following the opening blessing and song, Denise Kadara, Allensworth Progressive Association (APA), provided additional remarks on the history of the APA and community of Allensworth generally. In 1908, Allensworth was founded by Colonel Alan Allensworth, Professor William Payne, and other pioneers leaving the Jim Crow south to start a community for African Americans in the Central Valley. 800 acres of land were acquired from the Pacific Land Company and included an agreement to provide water to serve the town. From 1908 through 1913, the community enjoyed rapid expansion, but after the Pacific Land Company refused to honor the commitment to provide reliable water, many residents left for nearby Tulare and other parts of the Central Valley. Many residents remained, despite significant issues such as the discovery of arsenic contamination in groundwater supplies for drinking water. The Allensworth Community Service District was established in the 1990s to provide reliable drinking water for the town. Nonetheless, most of the town still lacks essential services and is subject to a variety of climate challenges including extreme heat, drought, and flooding (the most recent large-scale flooding occurred in 2023). The APA is committed to proactively meeting these challenges, improving economic opportunities, and ensuring Allensworth can thrive.

Jeff added that in 2016 and 2017, elders and members of the Santa Rosa Rancheria met with Allensworth community members and the APA to share stories and build a partnership to help address many of their shared issues, including climate-induced challenges and adaptation needs. Jeff noted he was also invited to participate in a regenerative agriculture certification graduation in Allensworth recently to provide a land acknowledgement and continue to share cross-cultural traditions.

Assefa concluded the item by sharing opening remarks on behalf of LCI, noting ICARP TAC Chair Abby Edwards is currently on maternity leave. LCI recently launched the Vulnerable Communities Platform to uplift unique vulnerabilities of communities. ICARP programs have also provided $8 million in climate resiliency investments in the Allensworth region. The Extreme Heat and Community Resilience Program specifically has provided $4.5 million for 7 projects in the area to support the development of heat action plans, improve alert systems, and provide cooling solutions to heat-burdened communities.

Approval of Draft Meeting Minutes

Magill led discussion and approval of the August 22, 2025, TAC meeting minutes. After a brief introduction, the following conversation was recorded:

- Linda Helland, CDPH, requested bullets 4 and 5 on page 2 be modified to read the efforts and projects are underway as opposed to complete.

Public Comment

None.

Roberto Carlos Torres made a motion to approve the August 22, 2025, meeting minutes. Helland seconded. With 10 ayes, 0 notes, and 5 abstentions, the minutes were approved.

Aye: Alex Ghennis, Jaylen Tran, John Wentworth, Jonathan Parfrey, Kim Clark, Linda Helland, Nathan Bengsston, Roberto Carlos Torres, Melissa Boudrye, Nina Bingham

No: None.

Abstain: Sam Assefa, Jenn Philips, David Loya, Denise Kadara, Nayamin Martinez,

Project Spotlights

Vince David, Executive Director, provided an overview of the APA. The APA was established in 1997 as an all-volunteer body and served as the governing body of the Allensworth community. Currently, the APA has 10 employees to provide governance support, grant compliance, and project implementation capacity. Additionally, the APA leads a 10-person Community Action Committee to assist with community outreach, as well as a growing network of consultants and partner organizations. David closed by noting the APA is supported by the Allensworth Elementary School District, which helps anchor the educational pipeline and links arts, athletics, and environmental literacy to the community, as well as the Friends Allensworth (a 501(c)3) and Allensworth Community Development Corporation (ACDC). The ACDC manages enterprise development and community assets.

David introduced additional APA priorities, including:

- The planned Civic and Resiliency Center
- Farm enterprise projects and an agroecology hub
- A community plan to address food and water insecurity

These priorities are discussed in more detail below.

Community Plan

Dezaraye Bagalayous, APA, provided an overview of the Allensworth Community Plan (Plan). A framework of the Plan was approved in 2022 to serve as a roadmap to build on the existing cultural, ecological, and social assets needed to provide residents with a safe place to live, learn, and work. The Plan was developed through extensive public engagement and outreach and identifies 15 specific community priorities including:

1. Achieving rural self-sufficiency
2. Public health and safety/community well-being
3. Climate resilience
4. Environmental justice
5. Educational advancement
6. Economic development
7. Regenerative agriculture and food security
8. Eco, agro, and cultural tourism
9. Ecosystem health
10. Environmental resource management and infrastructure security
11. Water security
12. Community infrastructure and public facilities
13. Energy sovereignty
14. Affordable housing and anti-displacement regulation
15. Place-sensitive art, architecture, and landscape design/town planning

The Plan was submitted to the Tulare County in May 2025 and upon approval, will serve as the guiding document to incorporate environmentally sensitive and culturally appropriate projects into all facets of community development and resiliency.

Agroecology Hub

Jose Armando Mungia, APA, provided an overview of the Agroecology Hub concept (Hub) for agriculture enterprise development. The Hub concept was developed in partnership with the APA and community residents to serve as a model for 21st century agriculture systems for rural communities in California. When implemented, the Hub is intended to be a sustainable, chemical-free, nutrient-rich food system using

principles of regenerative agriculture and farm enterprise systems paired with constant community engagement for workforce development and education.

The result is a conceptual model that includes natural wind breaks to reduce soil erosion, diversified crop types with orchards and row crops, and a modern surface water system for targeted and sustainable irrigation. This concept also includes deploying photovoltaics to provide energy for irrigation pumps and sprinklers while also providing critical shade areas for sensitive crops, soil health, and farmworker safety. Utilizing solar panels in this fashion is known as "agrivoltaics" and is used extensively in Europe.

Civic Resiliency Center

Tekoah Kadara, APA, provided an overview of a planned Civic Resiliency Center (Center) for Allensworth. Currently, Allensworth has limited access to safe and affordable water, and residents regularly have to travel 15-20 miles for bottled water, groceries, medical services, and other basic community needs. Additionally, the community lacks a centralized facility for community meetings, computer access, and cooling centers. The Center is expected to fill these needs and will include:

- A medical center
- Heating and cooling center
- Restaurants and a commercial kitchen
- A community cottage store
- Postal services
- APA/ACSD offices
- Computer lab and homework room
- Water kiosks utilizing arsenic water remediation technology
- Retail space

Design of the Center began in 2023 and is currently in the fundraising stage. An initial grant of $1.6 million was provided by CNRA. The full buildout is expected to cost $10.3 million. Close partnerships have been/are being developed with a wide array of project supporters including community members, private organizations, Tribal partnerships, and County/State agencies.

The Center utilizes the "5 S's of Allensworth" to achieve solidarity, self-determination, stewardship, sustainability, and sovereignty.

Discussion

Assefa led a discussion session with TAC members on the presentations listed above. The input and questions received are as follows; chair/staff responses are provided below as sub-bullets:

- Nina Bingham, CDFA, asked if there were any lessons learned from the agroecology efforts in Allensworth.
    - Armando Mungia said one of the big lessons learned is that communities are responsible for their own soil remediation work to ensure soil is healthy enough to grow sustainable crops. All communities face different challenges and conditions as soil health is improved. For Allensworth, staff expect soil remediation to take at least three years before crops can be planted. It should be noted that having a reliable water supply is also essential for building soil health.
- Carlos Torres thanked the presenters and congratulated them on developing a holistic program for community, food system, and environmental sustainability.
- Helland asked if the APA and its partners are experimenting with different models for land ownership (i.e., cooperatives, collective ownership, etc.).
    - Bagalayous responded APA is looking at cooperative development of the various projects and community land trusts for the actual ownership.

Partnerships to Drive Action

American Red Cross

Margarita Moreno, American Red Cross, provided a presentation on community-led resilience activities conducted in partnership with Allensworth following the 2023 flood. Moreno's presentation focused on the Red Cross Community Adaptation Program (CAP). The CAP focuses on three pillars: hunger, health, and housing and works by providing hyper local, hyper relational support building on the assets and strengths of Allensworth.

Following the flood, Allensworth residents organized their own rescue and support efforts. Following intervention by State Senator Melissa Hurtado, CAP worked directly with community members to deliver essential items like drinking water in the short term and developed long-term recovery and resiliency plans through collaborative action with residents. This includes improvements to the existing Allensworth community center such as indoor and outdoor cooling infrastructure, backup power generators, a community stove, and a community vehicle. In partnership with CAP, Allensworth has also expanded emergency supply storage and training facilities for things like CPR certification.

Native Plant Society/Power in Nature

Barbara Brydolf, California Native Plant Society/Power In Nature, delivered a presentation on regional efforts to support the 30x30 initiative. The Society's goal is to preserve and uplift native plants as the basis of the ecosystems they form. Power in Nature is a coalition of organizations promoting California's 30x30 initiative to conserve 30% of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030. Locally, Power Back has worked in and around the Tulare Lake Basin to restore native plant communities. It has also worked with the Tulee River Indian Tribe and the Tachi Yokuts Tribe on a native land back program to acquire 17,000 acres to restore native plants and riparian areas such as the Deer Creek watershed. These are multi-benefit projects that will also help downstream communities such as Allensworth with increased flood risk reduction and water quality improvements.

Regional Collaboration for Conservation

Kathy McLaughlin, TKM Consulting Inc., provided a presentation on regional conservation collaboratives in the greater Tulare Basin area. In partnership with Allensworth and a variety of state and federal agencies, a roundtable was held to discuss flood risk reduction and conservation efforts in the White River area and Allensworth Ecological Reserve. Other projects on Atwell Island and in the Deer Creek corridor were also discussed. Allensworth was unable to secure a Building Resilient Infrastructure and Community (BRIC) grant for further work, as it wasn't included in Tulare County's hazard mitigation plan. Future efforts will pursue multi-benefit land repurposing and other conservation efforts that can be carried out within and around communities like Allensworth. Close coordination and collaboration with all impacted communities, local, state, Tribal, and federal agencies is needed to ensure the success of these efforts.

Discussion

Assefa led a discussion session with TAC members on the presentations listed above. The input and questions received are as follows; chair/staff responses are provided below as sub-bullets:

- Nayamin Martinez asked if CAP is working with other communities in the Central Valley, and what the process is for unincorporated communities to participate.
    - Moreno noted CAP is active in 19 communities nationwide, all of which experience high levels of social vulnerability and extreme weather risk. Moreno committed to working with Martinez to get more information on how to participate.
- Jonathan Parfrey asked how the Red Cross works with communities who may be apprehensive about working on climate change issues.
    - Moreno responded that the Red Cross is ultimately a humanitarian organization focused on human communities. By focusing on human experiences and humanizing the impact of climate change on communities, it helps depoliticize issues.
- Assefa asked what kind of regional barriers the presenters have observed across regions or counties.
    - Brydolf said that some areas are more ready for conservation activities than others. In the Upper Kings River watershed, the Native Plant Society was contacted directly by local partners to help bring in ecosystem benefits and integrated regional water management planning. Conversely, further downstream, some communities have been much more resistant to conservation planning and restoration.
    - McLaughlin said capacity is always an issue in rural areas. There are also institutional barriers in many areas, such as the exclusion of the Tulare Lake Basin from the Central Valley Flood Protection Board's Flood Control Plan.
- Melissa Boudrye, CalOES, asked what tools, resources, or technical assistance would be helpful to all of the organizations presenting.
    - Brydolf said increased technical assistance and outreach to rural communities to let them know resources at the state level exist would be helpful.
    - Moreno said developing funding sources for all rural communities would be useful. For example, federal grants may exist to work with Tribes, but they only apply to federally recognized Tribes.
    - McLaughlin said California has been very supportive in providing technical assistance. In particular, CNRA's Deputy Secretary for Tribal Affairs has been extremely helpful connecting organizations, communities, and Tribes with grant opportunities they may not have been aware of.
- John Wentworth asked if California Jobs First has played any role in the work of the presenters. He also noted Jobs First is a great resource for all regions of California and offered to be a resource for all interested parties.
    - Brydolf noted the Sequoia Riverlands Trust has received significant support from Jobs First. Groups like the TAC that bring multiple agencies together are also very useful in sharing information across organizations and agencies.
- Kadara stressed the importance of volunteers for the success of Allensworth's projects and programs. There are many other communities like Allensworth that may not have the support of this kind of volunteer base. Training, capacity building, technical and financial assistance, and consistent outreach are vital for implementing these types of efforts. Martinez stressed the importance of this type of assistance- capacity building is critical for these types of efforts.

General Public Comment

- Ben Sindle, UC Berkeley, said if Allensworth is a model for small, impoverished rural communities, what do you plan on doing to help other communities adopt similar programs?

    - Assefa responded the first step is going out to communities directly to hear from residents directly. Groups like the TAC can also communicate needs across state agencies. Although funding is never guaranteed, building relationships and improving communication is critical for other communities to follow the Allensworth model.
- Councilmember Brian Osorio, City of Delano, said in addition to serving as a councilmember, he also serves as the program manager with Building Health Communities as part of the Jobs First initiative. The APA has led the work to organize community residents and build youth leaders. They are learning about the history of their community but are also involved with technical/policy issues such as Sustainable Groundwater Management Act implementation. These types of policy issues are very complex, and for Allensworth to be involved in so many technical issues with very limited capacity (in addition to infrastructure projects) is very impressive.

Allensworth Community Center, Garden, and Arsenic Water Treatment Lab Field Tour

Following the in-person meeting, TAC members reconvened at the Allensworth Community Center for a brief history of Allensworth, an overview of its programs and initiatives, and a tour of the Allensworth Garden.

David provided a recap of the APA's organization and stressed much of the work being done in Allensworth is driven by community members. As discussed above, multiple, large-scale initiatives are being planned and implemented. The existing community center sits on the site of the future Community Resiliency Center. Small scale farming demonstrations such as the adjacent garden are showing promising techniques that can be applied to the future agroecology hub.

Following David's opening remarks, Kayode Kadara, APA Board Advisor, provided a history of Allensworth with a focus on arsenic remediation efforts to date. Kayode Kadara noted Allensworth depends on groundwater for all water sources. Arsenic was used as a defoliant for cotton production for many years, leeching into groundwater and contaminating the community's main drinking water source. In some areas, arsenic concentrations reached 200-300 parts per billion (ppb); the current maximum contaminant level (MCL) for arsenic is 10 ppb. As a result, Allensworth currently pipes water from 3 miles away where contamination levels are below the MCL. The APA and community members have worked closely with academic institutions to construct an arsenic remediation/water treatment lab; the lab currently employs remediation technology that reduces the 300 ppb concentration to far less than the MCL. Soon, the APA hopes to deploy water kiosks to provide this safe, treated water for all residents.

<u>Discussion</u>

Assefa led a discussion session with TAC members on the presentations listed above. The input and questions received are as follows; chair/staff responses are provided below as sub-bullets:

- Assefa expressed strong support for small scale demonstration projects: these efforts can be scaled up if they are successful or serve as important learning opportunities if they don't produce the desired results. Additionally, the multi-generational approach to the APA's work ensures that younger community members are invested in the success of long-term efforts.
- Martinez asked if solar arrays have already been deployed for agrivoltaics purposes.
    - Armando Mungia responded the APA is still working on land acquisition and project siting for the agroecology hub.
- Bingham asked if successful soil remediation demonstration projects are ready to be scaled up.

    - Armando Mungia noted Allensworth is already seeing improvements in soil health, including a buildup of organic matter and increased water capacity. The California Department of Water Resources is providing technical assistance and satellite imagery to help identify potential site locations for larger regenerative farming operations.
- Boudrye asked if the APA is documenting best practices and lessons learned to share with other communities.
    - David confirmed that this documentation is included as part of grant agreements.
- Clark noted the agroecology hub concept includes 28 different crops and asked if crop types were selected based on available water quality and quantity.
    - Armando Mungia confirmed that crop selection is based on expected conditions. The groundwater basin tends to be extremely saline; salt-tolerant crops are important. As soil conditions improve, other climate-appropriate crops may be planted.
- Bengtsson asked what actions can be done now to prepare for more climate-related disasters.
    - Tekoah Kadara said more work to capture flood/run-off water for future use could be very beneficial (as opposed to just flooding the surrounding area).
    - McLaughlin added conducting hydraulics and hydrology studies on nearby tributaries could be very beneficial for long-term planning.
- Sierra Woodruff, LCI, asked how the APA has built and expanded partnerships with academia.
    - Bagalayous responded engaging with academia has been hugely helpful. Having UC Merced nearby has been a major benefit. Bringing university students to Allensworth has the added benefit of showing local youth it is possible to excel in academics. Tekoah Kadara added that large-scale agricultural operations have been hesitant to invest in the area due to concerns about soil health, but having a close relationship with academics has helped improve this perspective.

Following the discussion in the community center, TAC members toured the Allensworth garden to observe efforts to improve soil health and determine which crops are best suited to current conditions. Kaashif Nash-Bey, APA Farm Coordinator, led the tour with support from APA staff to showcase current and expected future successes in the garden.

After the garden tour, TAC members visited the Allensworth Arsenic Water Treatment Lab. The tour was led by Ben Sindle and Jay Majmdar, UC Berkeley. Sindle and Majmdar explained how the technology works, as well as the lab's current output. Local residents are welcome to utilize the water after treatment; in the future, UC Berkeley and Allensworth may build a larger scale demonstration for arsenic remediation and provide kiosks closer to the planned Community Resiliency Center to provide safe drinking water for residents.

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