



RESEARCH, EDUCATION & COMMUNICATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, March 10, 2026
Time: 10:00am
Place: Lodi Winegrape Commission, 2545 W Turner Road, Lodi, CA 95242

1. The **meeting was called to order** at 10:09am by Committee Chairman Dawson Lewis.
2. Those in **attendance** are indicated below.

First Name	Last Name	Attended
Scott	Armolea	
Amy	Blagg	
Kyle	Brown	X
Kevin	den Hartog	X
Mike	Klouda	X
Joe	Larranaga	
Dawson	Lewis	X
Keith	Striegler	
Joe	Valente	X

Staff present: Stephanie Bolton and Stuart Spencer.
Guests present: Cameron Heinitz (Kautz Farms).

3. **Consideration of previous minutes.** den Hartog/Valente made a motion to approve the January 12, 2026 meeting minutes. The motion was carried on a vote of Committee members present. No “no” votes. No abstentions.

4. **Public comment:** none.

5. **Grower education programs.**

- **Review of recent initiatives and growing season**
 - Committee members discussed the growing season. Right now everything is looking to be 3-4 weeks ahead of schedule.
 - Committee members updated everyone on their “Member Projects” where each REC Committee member leads a project that they care about on behalf of the Commission to help the broader Lodi Winegrowing Community. Each project is in the area of viticulture research, education and/or communications. Project updates:
 - Kyle Brown: Tree of Heaven removal workshop at LangeTwins
 - Mike Klouda: Regenerative viticulture trial at Michael David
 - Keith Streigler: Rootstock evaluation
 - Joe Valente and Cameron Heinitz (COMPLETED): Pruning competition with 80 students, Cameron wrote a lodigrowers.com blog article
 - Amy Blagg: OSHA autonomous farm equipment regulations
 - Joe Larranaga: TBD, possible water project
 - Kevin den Hartog: TBD
 - Dawson Lewis: TBD, possibly mating disruption
 - Scott Armolea: TBD

- Roundtable review of recent meetings and events.
 - LODI RULES Annual Grower & Winery Meeting
 - Lodi Winegrape Commission Annual Meeting
 - Lodi Grape Day
 - Lodi Farm Safety Day
- **Future outreach initiatives**
 - Committee members were invited to:
 - March 11 UC On the Road in Lodi
 - April 1 LDGGA Water Forum
 - April 7 IPM Meeting: Powdery Mildew & Barn Owls
 - Apply for Xerces native plant pollinator kits by April 10
 - Ideas for future meetings: profitability, alternative crops, “A Journey Into Vine Health”, crop rotation and herbicides/plant back restrictions, rootstocks and drought tolerance, Axel Borg (UC V&E Librarian), grower/winemaker relationships, the grape market, field-in technology, a microscope series, robotics, and permanent/full ground cover.

6. **Grower communications.**

- Grower e-Newsletter emails are sent up to a few times per month as needed, with an extensive calendar at the bottom.
- The lodigrowers.com website is updated frequently with educational events (under the Education heading, Local Opportunities page). Stephanie Bolton manages our weekly viticulture blogs, which are often picked up by industry news outlets.
- Stephanie Bolton is providing extensive consultation to farming families regarding vineyard removals to help them through the process emotionally, logistically, and financially.
- Nearly 700 assessment-paying CD11 Lodi growers were mailed a packet containing the following:
 - Postcard invitation to the March 5 Lodi Winegrape Commission Annual Meeting
 - Letter with our strategy for overcoming this challenging winegrape market together
 - Blog article “Why Lodi is Forming a Winery Improvement District” by Stuart Spencer
 - Blog article “20 Grower-Friendly Marketing Ideas” by Stephanie Bolton
 - A LODI RULES sticker or postcard
 - Two wooden nickels to pass out to promote Lodi Winegrapes, good for a free wine tasting at the Lodi Wine Visitor Center

7. **Winegrape research in Crush District 11. Research projects and focus group updates:**

- The Commission continues to develop close working relationships with skilled scientists, who collaborate with us on research projects in the areas of soil, water, sustainability, pests and diseases, rodent control, climate change, and more.
- The Rootstock Research Focus Group meets on demand as they process five years of research. Growers can contact Dr. Stephanie Bolton to participate in on-farm small rootstock trials.
- Maria Zumkeller has created an Arc GIS dashboard which works with the free iNaturalist app to track our local Tree of Heaven populations so we can monitor their presence, scout them for the spotted lanternfly, and monitor their destruction post-scouting.
- Stephanie Bolton will deliver a keynote speaker at the International Conference on Grapevine Viruses called “An Ongoing Grower-Led Holistic Grapevine Virus Outreach & Extension Project in California, USA” which includes Committee members Mike Klouda, Keith Striegler and Kyle Brown as co-authors. This international conference is held every two years and this is the first time the organizers opened the abstracts to extension work.
- Three grant projects submitted to PD/GWSS work in partnership with the Lodi Winegrape Commission growers.

8. **Weather Network services.** Afternoon frost forecasts are in effect.

9. The **FY2025-26 Budget** was reviewed.

10. **Reports from other Committees.**

- Stuart Spencer updated the Committee on the upcoming Lodi Winegrape Commission referendum, marketing activities, and the Business Improvement District.

11. **Public comment on items not appearing on the agenda (2 min limit):** none.
12. **Items for future agendas:** none.
13. The **next meeting is scheduled for May 12, 2026 at 12pm.**
14. The **meeting was adjourned** at 11:34am.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stephanie L. Bolton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Stephanie L. Bolton, PhD
Research & Education Director
Lodi Winegrape Commission