Approved – July 29, 2026

Minutes of the American Pecan Promotion Board Meeting
1431 Greenway Dr. Irving, TX 75038
Wednesday, February 11, 2026
12:00-3:00 pm CT.

Agenda
See Agenda Attached.

Attendees
See Attendee List Attached.

I. CALL TO ORDER

In the absence of Chair Ms. Walden-Ralls, Mr. Mason called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. Central Time on February 11, 2026, at the American Pecan Office in Irving, Texas, with virtual attendance available via WebEx. Mr. Ivey delivered the invocation, followed by Mr. Hamilton leading the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. Garner confirmed that a quorum was present.

On behalf of Chair Walden-Ralls, Chief Executive Officer Ms. Warden read a letter expressing appreciation for the Board's continued leadership and commitment to advancing the American pecan industry during her absence.

Motion:
Mr. Mason motioned to appoint Mr. Salopek as Chair Pro Tem to preside over the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Womack, and unanimously approved.

Chair Pro Tem Salopek welcomed Board members, alternates, USDA representatives, staff, and industry guests. He recognized the Board's newly appointed members and thanked them for their willingness to serve the industry. On behalf of the Secretary of Agriculture, USDA representatives presented certificates of appointment to Trent Mason, Greg Leger, Justin Jones, Mark Hamilton, Ana Lucia Sanchez, and Sally Arn. Mr. Salopek expressed appreciation for the time, leadership, and expertise each member brings to the Board and emphasized the importance of their service in advancing the American pecan industry.

Prior to proceeding with the agenda, USDA presented the antitrust statement.

III. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Chair Pro Tem Salopek called for a motion to approve the minutes of the July 16, 2025, Board meeting.

Motion: Mr. Montz moved to approve, and Mr. Soria seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

CHAIR REPORT

Chair Pro Tem Salopek provided the Chair's report on behalf of Chair Walden-Ralls. He welcomed the Board's newly appointed members and thanked all Board members for their continued dedication and volunteer leadership in advancing the American pecan industry. He noted that the Board continues to make meaningful progress toward its long-term strategic priorities and emphasized the importance of maintaining collaboration across all industry sectors.

USDA UPDATE

Ms. Richardson, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, provided an update on program administration and compliance activities. She reported that staff continue to work through outstanding compliance matters, with several cases having been referred to the USDA Office of the General Counsel while additional cases remain under active review. Ms. Richardson thanked Board members and staff for their continued cooperation and commitment to administering the promotion program in accordance with the Order.

CEO UPDATE

Chief Executive Officer Ms. Warden noted that the February Board meeting serves as the organization's strategic planning meeting for the coming fiscal year, establishing priorities that will guide development of the Fiscal Year 2027 budget and work plans presented later in the year. She emphasized that the Unified Pecan Promotion Plan (UPPP) continues to provide the strategic framework for the Board's initiatives and future investments.

Ms. Warden reported that the Board's long-term strategy continues to deliver measurable results and emphasized that the Unified Pecan Promotion Plan is working. She highlighted continued growth in domestic sales, increasing buyer competition across foodservice and consumer packaged goods channels, expanding consumer recognition of pecans' nutritional value, and meaningful progress toward the organization's long-term objectives. She emphasized that these accomplishments position the industry for continued long-term growth. Ms. Warden also reviewed the FY2026–2028 Unified Pecan Promotion Plan, including the FY2025 Scorecard and the upcoming Board reapportionment review. She reaffirmed the organization's guiding values of Trust, Unity, and Performance, encouraging members to consider how the organization can continue building upon its accomplishments over the next five years.

Ms. Schaffner presented the FY2025 Unified Pecan Promotion Plan Scorecard, highlighting significant accomplishments across the Board's marketing, research, industry engagement, and market development initiatives. She reported continued expansion of health professional outreach, increased participation in nutrition research, successful retail activation campaigns, in-store sampling programs, and expanded national consumer engagement through partnerships with Catalina, Instacart, Amazon, GymTV, and Chicory. Ms. Schaffner noted that staff continue to work with the Marketing Committee to strengthen Amazon performance while building upon successful retail and e-commerce partnerships.

Ms. Schaffner also provided updates on communications and consumer marketing initiatives, highlighting continued growth in social media engagement, influencer partnerships, recipe development, and foodservice marketing. Staff reviewed ongoing efforts to expand demand through the "El Poder de la Nuez" campaign in Mexico, retail partnerships with H-E-B and Soriana, international market development, and enhancements to the Board's consumer and industry websites. Members also discussed positive consumer perceptions of pecans as a premium ingredient, opportunities to expand foodservice menu innovation, and upcoming consumer perception research that will further inform future marketing strategies.

Chair Pro Tem Mr. Salopek commended the staff for their professionalism, innovation, and commitment to delivering measurable value to the industry. He thanked the team for their continued dedication to advancing the Board's strategic objectives and positioning American pecans for long-term growth.

V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Chair Pro Tem Mr. Salopek reported that the American Pecan Group (APG) continues to make significant progress following its formation and has successfully transitioned into regular operations. The Executive Committee reviewed the status of the APG transition, discussed ongoing structural developments and organizational coordination, and considered next steps to support continued implementation of shared administrative services.

The Committee also reviewed the Board's required reapportionment analysis in accordance with the Order, discussed the proposed memorandum to the Board, and received an update on the status of the FAIR Act Study. In addition, the Committee reviewed the upcoming Board election schedule, nomination procedures, and open Board seats. Members were encouraged to continue promoting industry participation in the nomination process.

MARKETING COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Womack reported on behalf of the Marketing Committee, highlighting continued progress across the Board's domestic marketing initiatives. The Committee reviewed successful retail partnerships, year-round snacking and in-store sampling campaigns, and strong e-commerce performance. Marketing efforts contributed to approximately 4.1 percent growth in the snacking category, an average retail sales lift of 66 percent across approximately 7,000 participating stores, and significant gains through e-commerce initiatives. The Committee also discussed opportunities to further strengthen retail media through a new retail media partner.

The Committee also received updates on digital marketing initiatives, including continued growth in website traffic following enhancements to EatPecans.com, ongoing menu innovation and foodservice partnerships, marketing activities in Mexico, and the Fiscal Year 2026–2028 Unified Pecan Promotion Plan. The Committee recommended approval of the Unified Pecan Promotion Plan by the Board later in the meeting.

RESEARCH COMMITTEE REPORT

Chair Pro Tem Mr. Salopek, Chair of the Research Committee, reported on the Board's expanding scientific research portfolio. The Committee reviewed the Board's research pipeline, which now includes 14 completed studies, four studies in progress, and two new studies launching in Fiscal Year 2026 examining the effects of pecan consumption on diabetes and cognitive health. Members also received updates on the recently completed literature review and analysis of the NHANES database, as well as plans to expand NHANES research to further evaluate the health benefits of consuming one to two ounces of pecans daily.

The Committee also reviewed health professional outreach efforts, including new educational resources and upcoming wellness-focused campaigns to support science-based consumer messaging. Members noted recent health professional perception research indicating increased recommendations of pecans by health professionals. In addition, the Committee reviewed the Fiscal Year 2026–2028 Unified Pecan Promotion Plan and recommended its approval by the Board later in the meeting.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Finance Committee Chair Trent Mason deferred the report to Director of Finance Brandon Drummond, who summarized the Board's financial position. Mr. Drummond reviewed Fiscal Year 2025 financial results, noting that domestic assessment revenue exceeded budget while import assessment revenue reflected current industry conditions. He also reported that the Board maintained a strong cash position and that Fiscal Year 2026 assessment collections remained on track. The Committee reviewed the unaudited May through November 2025 financial statements and recommended Board approval.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

FY2025 FINANCIAL AUDIT REPORT

Director of Finance Brandon Drummond introduced the Fiscal Year 2025 Financial Audit Report presented by Moss, Krusick & Associates. The independent auditors reported that the Board received an unmodified ("clean") audit opinion with no significant findings. Mr. Drummond also highlighted ongoing improvements in assessment administration and collections, noting that continued compliance and audit activities have strengthened the Board's financial reporting processes. Members also discussed ongoing assessment collection efforts and the positive return on investment generated through compliance audits.

Motion: Mr. Garza motioned to approve the Fiscal Year 2025 Financial Audit Report as presented by Moss, Krusick & Associates. The motion was seconded by Mr. Montz, and the Board unanimously approved

PRELIMINARY FINANCIAL STATEMENTS – MAY THROUGH NOVEMBER 2025

Mr. Drummond presented the unaudited financial statements for May through November 2025, reporting that domestic assessment revenue exceeded budget while import assessment revenue reflected reduced import volumes and importer turnover. He noted that the Board maintained a strong cash position and that Fiscal Year 2026 assessment collections had returned to budget expectations. Board members discussed non-assessable credits and ongoing collection efforts.

Motion: Mr. Hamilton motioned to approve the unaudited May through November 2025 financial statements. The motion was seconded by Mr. Womack, and the Board approved.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

INVESTMENT STRATEGY REVIEW

Mr. Drummond presented the Finance Committee's recommendation to invest an additional $1,000,000 of excess cash reserves in a 12-month U.S. Treasury investment. He explained that the recommendation would diversify investment maturities while continuing the Board's conservative investment strategy and maintaining adequate operating reserves. Board members discussed the investment schedule, reserve requirements, and future cash flow considerations.

Motion:

Mr. Ivey motioned to approve investing an additional $1,000,000 of cash reserves in a 12-month U.S. Treasury as recommended by the Finance Committee. The motion was seconded by Mr. Jones, and the Board approved.

SOCIAL MEDIA & AI POLICY

Mr. Sanders presented the proposed Social Media and Artificial Intelligence Policy, explaining that it establishes expectations for Board-related communications and provides guidance on the appropriate use of artificial intelligence tools. Members also discussed implementation of ChatGPT Enterprise to improve operational efficiency while protecting confidential information and maintaining USDA compliance.

Motion: Mr. Womack motioned to approve the social media and Artificial Intelligence Policy as presented. Mr. Jones seconded the motion, and the Board approved.

REAPPORTIONMENT REVIEW

Ms. Warden presented the Executive Committee's recommendation regarding the Board's required five-year reapportionment review. Staff reviewed current domestic production and import data, noting declining import volumes and changes in regional production that support reducing importer representation by one seat and increasing Eastern producer representation by one seat. Members discussed the proposed changes, implementation timeline, regional representation, and USDA review process. The Board expressed support for the proposal, noting that it more accurately reflects current industry production while maintaining balanced representation.

Motion: Mr. Womack motioned to approve the proposed reapportionment, as outlined in the memorandum recommended by the Executive Committee. Mr. Hamilton seconded the motion, and the Board approved.

FY 2027 UNIFIED PECAN PROMOTION PLAN

Ms. Warden presented the proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Unified Pecan Promotion Plan, explaining that the document provides the strategic framework that will guide future budgets, work plans, and program implementation. She noted that the Plan will continue to evolve based on industry feedback received through state and regional meetings and will incorporate new insights from the Board's Price Driver Analysis. Board members discussed opportunities to continue refining the Plan while emphasizing the importance of maintaining a long-term strategic vision for the industry.

Motion: Mr. Hamilton motioned to approve the Fiscal Year 2027 Unified Pecan Promotion Plan. Mr. Ivey seconded the motion, and the Board approved.

VIII. AD HOC

Members discussed emerging international regulatory developments affecting export markets, including proposed European Union standards and their potential implications for U.S. pecans. The Board also discussed emerging environmental contaminants, including per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), and the potential need for future research to better understand their presence in pecan production systems. Staff will continue monitoring these developments and evaluate future research and industry education opportunities.

IX. OFFICER ELECTIONS

The Board conducted its annual election of officers for the term beginning October 1, 2026.

Chair

Ms. Deborah Walden-Ralls was nominated for the office of Chair.

Motion: Mr. Hamilton moved to close nominations for the office of Chair. The motion was seconded by Mr. Montz and passed by majority vote.

Vice Chair

Mr. Trent Mason was nominated for the office of Vice Chair.

Motion: Mr. Salopek moved to close nominations for the office of Vice Chair. The motion was seconded by Mr. Jones and passed by majority vote.

Secretary
Mr. Jake Montz was nominated for the office of Secretary.

Motion: Mr. Leger moved to close nominations for the office of Secretary. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ivey and passed by majority vote.

Treasurer
Mr. Brycen Salopek was nominated for the office of Treasurer.

Motion: Mr. Womack moved to close nominations for the office of Treasurer. The motion was seconded by Mr. Jones and passed by majority vote.

Following the close of nominations, the Board elected the following officers to serve terms beginning October 1, 2026:

Chair: Deborah Walden-Ralls
Vice Chair: Trent Mason
Secretary: Jake Montz
Treasurer: Brycen Salopek

X. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chair Pro Tem Brycen Salopek thanked the members, USDA representatives, staff, and guests for their participation, leadership, and continued service to the American pecan industry.

Motion: Mr. Ivey motioned to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hamilton, and passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:06 p.m. Central Time.

AMERICAN PECAN PROMOTION BOARD
AGENDA

February 11, 2026
12:00 p.m. Central Time

The Embassy Office
1431 Greenway Dr. Irving, TX 75038

I. CALL TO ORDER
II. ROLL CALL
III. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES *[Action]*
IV. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS
- A. Chair Report
- B. USDA Report
- C. CEO Report

V. COMMITTEE REPORTS
- A. Executive
- B. Finance
- C. Marketing
- D. Research

VI. OLD BUSINESS
- A. FY25 Financial Audit Report *[Action]*
- B. Preliminary Financial Statements – May through November 2025 *[Action]*

VII. NEW BUSINESS
- A. Investment Strategy Review *[Action]*
- B. Social Media & AI Policy *[Action]*
- C. Reapportionment Review *[Action]*
- D. Unified Pecan Promotion Plan FY27 *[Action]*
- E. Board Member Elections – Term Beginning 10/1/26

VIII. OFFICER ELECTIONS *[Action]*
IX. ADJOURNMENT *[Action]*

Attendee List

Board Members Present:

Trent Mason
Greg Leger
Justin Jones
Jake Montz
Shannon Ivey
Larry Don Womack
Deborah Walden-Ralls
Phillip Arnold
Brycen Salopek
Larry Salopek
Evo Soria
Ana Lucia Sanchez
Mark Hamilton
Romulo Garza
Steve Zaffarano
Sally Arn
Jeff Worn

USDA Attendees:

Alex Caryl, USDA AMS
Sarah Richardson, USDA AMS
Jennie Varela, USDA AMS
Rebecca Geller, USDA AMS

APPB Staff Present:

Anne Warden, APPB staff
Serena Schaffner, APPB staff
Brandon Drummond, APPB staff
Emma Garner, APPB staff
Kristi Mosquera, APPB staff
Bailey Segars, APPB staff
Gabrielle Teixeira, APPB staff
Carl Sanders, APPB staff
Joy Glass, APPB staff

Additional Attendees:

Andrew Downie
Kat Marty
Katia Storts, Moss Krusicks & Associates
Louie Salopek
Mary Bruorton
Paul Quiros