On June 23 the UC ANR Affirmative Action Office conducted an Affirmative Action On-Site Review for Fresno County.

On-site reviews are a requirement of the USDA and each state must review all their counties at least once every five years. California is a big state and the goal of the AA Office is to review five to six counties each fiscal year; once all the counties and multi-county partnerships are covered, we begin again. The USDA wants the states to review their counties in order to ensure they are following all federal civil rights laws and specific USDA regulations that apply to Cooperative Extension.

During a review, the advisors headquartered in that county are interviewed, also, any program managers/coordinators in that county who do not have advisors supervising their program are interviewed as well – usually with the County Director in attendance. The advisors are asked about their clientele groups and how they determine the needs of their clientele. They are asked about the overall goals for their program and their outreach efforts. Among other things, they’re also asked about minority participation in their program and disability accommodations.

The ANR approach to the on-site review is to treat it as a training opportunity for the counties. We stress that an on-site review is a review and not an audit. The whole point is not to find fault but to prepare, to train, the county and ANR personnel about issues that would be important if the USDA should come and perform an actual civil rights audit in their county.

At the opening session, the county’s entire CE staff along with those who are to be interviewed are invited to attend a presentation about how Affirmative Action and inclusion are important parts of ANR’s goals and mission.

The reviewers for Fresno’s on-site were Linda Manton, Affirmative Action Contact and Executive Director of Staff Personnel, John Sims, the new ANR AA Compliance Officer, and David White, Affirmative Action Analyst. Karen Ellsworth came along as a trainee who will be helping out with future on-site reviews.