



Background on Federal and Congressional Efforts Related to Pollinator Health

To help inform and provide context as you draft position statements, we have prepared the below summary of White House initiatives, proposed legislation, and other efforts related to pollinator health. It is not necessary to respond to all of these items; rather, they are intended to help you frame the discussion.

White House Initiatives

Presidential Memorandum on Pollinator Health

On June 20, the White House released a Presidential Memorandum titled “Creating a Federal Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators.” The memorandum detailed next steps to strengthen existing federal efforts and create new ones to mitigate pollinator loss and help restore pollinator populations.

Through Executive Order, President Obama has directed the creation of a Pollinator Health Task Force co-chaired by the Secretary of Agriculture and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. This Task Force includes representatives from the Department of State, Department of Defense, Department of the Interior, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Transportation, Department of Energy, Department of Education, Council on Environmental Quality, Domestic Policy Council, General Services Administration, National Science Foundation, National Security Guard Staff, Office of Management and Budget, Office of Science and Technology Policy, and “such other departments, agencies, and offices as the Co-Chairs may designate.”

The Task Force is charged with creating a National Pollinator Health Strategy within 180 days of the memorandum’s release. The Strategy will include:

- A Pollinator Research Action Plan “to focus on Federal efforts on understanding, preventing, and recovering from pollinator losses.”
- A Public Education Plan “for expanding and coordinating public education programs outlining steps individuals and businesses can take to help address the loss of pollinators.”
- Recommendations for developing Public-Private Partnerships to encourage pollinator protection and increase pollinator habitat and forage.

In addition, the Presidential Memorandum instructs the Task Force and Federal Agencies to undertake actions to increase and improve pollinator habitat. Notable provisions include:

- “Task Force member agencies shall develop and provide to the Task Force plans to enhance pollinator habitat, and subsequently implement, as appropriate, such plans on their managed lands and facilities, consistent with their missions and public safety. These plans may include: facility landscaping, including easements; land management; policies with respect to road and other rights-of-way; educational gardens; use of integrated vegetation and pest management; increased native vegetation; and application of pollinator-friendly best management practices and seed mixes. Task Force member agencies shall also review any

new or renewing land management contracts and grants for the opportunity to include requirements for enhancing pollinator habitat.”

- “Environmental Protection Agency shall assess the effect of pesticides, including neonicotinoids, on bee and other pollinator health and take action, as appropriate, to protect pollinators; engage State and tribal environmental, agricultural, and wildlife agencies in the development of State and tribal pollinator protection plans; encourage the incorporation of pollinator protection and habitat planting activities into green infrastructure and Superfund projects; and expedite review of registration applications for new products targeting pests harmful to pollinators.”
- “Executive departments and agencies shall, as appropriate, take immediate measures to support pollinators during the 2014 growing season and thereafter. These measures may include planting pollinator-friendly vegetation and increasing flower diversity in plantings, limiting mowing practices, and avoiding the use of pesticides in sensitive pollinator habitats through integrated vegetation and pest management practices.”

Federal agencies and states have announced efforts to help restore pollinator populations in coordination with the release of the Presidential Memorandum on pollinator health. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced \$8 million in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) incentives to establish new habitats for pollinators. Farmers and ranchers in Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin are eligible for this funding, which builds on the \$3 million USDA previously designated to these states through the National Resources Conservation Service Environmental Quality Incentives Program, also targeted at supporting declining bee populations. Additionally, EPA released guidance to help assess how different pesticides may pose threats to bees.

The Presidential Memorandum can be viewed at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/20/presidential-memorandum-creating-federal-strategy-promote-health-honey-b>.

ESA Response: In support of the President’s initiative, ESA issued a press release on June 25 applauding the Pollinator Health Strategy and echoing the importance of protecting pollinators. The press release is available at <http://www.entsoc.org/press-releases/esa-applauds-presidents-pollinator-health-strategy>.

Additionally, ESA sent a letter on September 15 to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden encouraging the Task Force to provide the scientific community an opportunity to offer feedback on the Pollinator Research Action Plan currently under development. ESA’s letter thanks Deputy Secretary Harden and USDA for its leadership on addressing the important challenge of improving pollinator health and notes that ESA, along with other organizations and experts in the field, would welcome a chance to provide comments, additional scientific information, and suggestions on the Research Action Plan as it is developed.

The letter is available at <http://www.entsoc.org/PDF/2014/PollinatorTaskForce.pdf>.

Proposed Legislation

Rep. Austin Scott’s Bill to Accelerate Control of Varroa Mite Populations

On September 10, Representative Austin Scott (R-GA) introduced legislation that seeks to improve pollinator health by controlling Varroa mite populations and other pests that threaten pollinators. The legislation, H.R. 5447, would amend the “Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act” (FIFRA) to create a faster review process for registering pesticides that target pollinator parasites. The bill would

also require the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency to submit a report examining the environmental and pathological factors that threaten pollinator health and another report on the availability and approval of pesticides to control parasitic pests that harm pollinators. The legislation can be viewed at <https://beta.congress.gov/113/bills/hr5447/BILLS-113hr5447ih.pdf>.

Highways BEE Act

The Bettering the Economy and Environmental Pollinator Protection Act (Highways BEE Act), H.R. 4790 was introduced by Representatives Alcee Hastings (D-FL) and Jeff Denham (R-CA), co-chairs of the Congressional Pollinator Protection Caucus on May 30. The legislation directs the Secretary of the Department of Transportation (DOT) to use existing programs, funding, and personnel to implement pollinator habitat efforts by interested State DOTs. The Act's objective is to utilize the nation's 17 million acres of highway right-of-ways to create habitats and migratory corridors that will contribute to the health of pollinators, while cutting down on maintenance costs. Similar legislation was introduced in 2011 and despite widespread support, the bill failed to become law. The legislation can be viewed at http://pollinator.org/PDFs/HASTFL_HR4790Text.pdf.

ESA Response: ESA joined 200 organizations and roughly 2,200 researchers as signatories on a letter to support the Highways BEE Act. The letter can be viewed at http://www.pollinator.org/PDFs/BEEActGroup_Support_Petition-Organizations.pdf.

Saving America's Pollinators Act of 2013

In July 2013, Representatives John Conyers (D-MI) and Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) introduced the "Saving America's Pollinators Act of 2013." The legislation would direct EPA "to take certain actions related to pesticides that may affect pollinators," noting the increased incidents of colony collapse disorder and the risk it poses to agricultural production in the U.S. Specifically, the legislation would ban the use of neonicotinoids until they are proven to not be dangerous to pollinators. The text of the legislation is available at <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/hr2692/text>.

Other Efforts

FWS to Phase Out Chemical Linked to Bee Death

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) launched a phase-out of the use of neonicotinoid insecticides in agricultural activity (meant to produce food for wildlife) in National Wildlife Refuge System Lands, with a full ban by January 2016. FWS made the announcement through a July 17 memorandum indicating that the prophylactic use of neonicotinoids may have broad adverse impacts on many "non-target insects." These "potential non-target impacts" run counter to the intent of FWS' Integrated Pest Management (IPM) policy and that the decision was made "based on a precautionary approach to our wildlife management practices and not on agricultural practices." The memorandum can be viewed at http://www.peer.org/assets/docs/fws/FWS_Memorandum.pdf.

Congressional Letter to EPA Urging Neonicotinoid Restriction

In an effort to build on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) phase-out of neonicotinoid insecticides in all National Wildlife Refuges by 2016, Congressmen Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and John Conyers Jr. (D-MI) circulated among House members a letter to be sent to EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy urging her to take further action to protect pollinators. The letter outlines several policy recommendations to EPA, including: restricting/suspending the use of neonicotinoids on bee attractive crops; evaluation of pesticides; compliance with Endangered Species Act Section 7 prior to registering pesticides; ensuring

pesticide labels are up to date and include bee hazard statements; assessment of pesticides for impacts on pollinators; phase out conditional registrations; rectify discrepancies between garden versus agricultural products; and re-categorize commercial neonicotinoid as restricted use. The full text of the letter is available at

http://www.blumenauer.house.gov/images/pdf/Letter_Urging_the_EPA_to_protect_pollinators.pdf.