



Pollinator Stewardship Council

P.O. Box 304, Perkinston, MS 39573

www.pollinatorstewardship.org

832-727-9492

May 13, 2015

Contact: Michele Colopy, Program Director
progdirector@pollinatorstewardship.org

No Quick Solutions to Pollinator Health Issues

The Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research Subcommittee held a hearing May 13th to review the federal coordination and response regarding pollinator health. The Pollinator Stewardship Council is appreciative of the Subcommittee's attentiveness to the delay in the publication of the White House Task Force Report on Pollinator Health. While this report was promised in Dec. 2014, obviously the Task Force has realized what beekeepers have always known: honey bee health issues are multi-faceted and there are no quick solutions. The pest, pathogens, pesticides, and poor forage affecting managed and native pollinators combine to affect pollinator health.

The Presidential Memorandum issued June 2014 requested all federal agencies work together to develop cohesive pollinator protections. The Subcommittee hearing held to task a letter from the USDA submitted to EPA concerning the economic benefit of treated soybean seeds. The Pollinator Stewardship Council supports an individual, as well as a federal or state agency, in submitting comment letters to the public docket for the public record. Submitting such a letter, we feel does not imply the agencies are not communicating. The airing of different opinions, even within federal agencies, is good for an open government.

The Pollinator Stewardship Council is supportive of the mission of the USDA and the EPA. We wish to work with both federal agencies in order to protect pollinators, crop

pollination services, honey production, and beekeeping. We may disagree with decisions made by either agency. Disagreements, however, are part of communication, including a letter submitted to the public docket for the public record.

The Pollinator Stewardship Council supports science-based policy decisions pertaining to pollinator pests, pathogens, pesticides, and poor forage. We will continue to work to protect pollinators from the impact of pesticides. Incident reports of the misuse, and legal use of pesticides harming pollinators is an important contribution to EPA's analysis of the real-world exposure of honey bees to pesticides. Many bee kills, however are not reported due to the legal use of pesticides in tank mixes. Tank mixes, a legal use, create synergies between the chemicals, creating new chemistries from the individual mixed products, increasing the toxicity of the mixed chemicals, and causing harm to honey bees. Research at Penn State, a land-grant college, examined the synergism of tank mixes of pesticides.

“During the study, Biddinger and other researchers showed that pesticide effects can vary between different species of pollinators, and that mixtures of insecticides with fungicides (which are normally thought to be safe to bees) can significantly increase the toxicity of the insecticide to bees. The researchers concluded that because of these varying effects, the pesticide registration process required by the EPA should be modified to include tests on additional species of bees since the honey bee is not representative and should look at common pesticide mixtures.”

“Many pesticides are registered as ‘reduced risk’ or ‘organophosphate replacements’ and have toxicity tests with the honey bee, but are in fact toxic to non-targeted organisms, such as other species of pollinators and beneficial predatory and parasitic insects in an integrated pest management program,” says Biddinger.”¹

Land grant colleges in the United States have been supportive of managed and native pollinator research, and the Pollinator Stewardship Council continues to call for additional research funding to support these independent scientists.

The hearing, however, like many documents, plans, and proposals supporting pollinators is waiting for the White House Task Force report on pollinator health. We are all anxious for the report which we hope will be released before or during National Pollinator week. The Pollinator

Stewardship Council is grateful to Ranking Member Ms. Suzan DelBene for her concerns that the hearing today featured only two witnesses: EPA and USDA. We agree with Rep. DelBene, and will be pleased to have other stakeholders: beekeepers, entomologists, and pollinator advocates appear before this subcommittee to discuss the coordination and response to pollinator health concerns, issues, and actions.

¹ **Pesticide Mixtures have Damaging Affects on Bees**, Oct. 14, 2013, Penn State Extension, <http://extension.psu.edu/pests/ipm/news/2013/pesticide-mixtures-have-damaging-affects-on-bees>

A multi-year field study to evaluate the environmental fate and agronomic effects of insecticide mixtures, Sara A. Whiting, Katherine E. Strain, Laura A. Campbell, BryanG.Young, MichaelJ.Lydy, Center for Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Aquatic Sciences and Department of Zoology, 1125 Lincoln Dr., Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901, USA, Plant, Soil, and Agricultural Systems Department, 1205 Lincoln Dr., Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901, USA http://pollinatorstewardship.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Whiting-et-al_2014_A-multi-year-field-study-evaluating-the-environmental-fate-and-agronomic-effects-of-insecticide-mixtures_-includes-clothianidin_SciTotEnv.pdf

Bees are more crucial to agriculture than fertilizer, June 11, 2014, MotherBoard <http://motherboard.vice.com/read/bees-are-more-crucial-to-agricultural-success-than-fertilizer>

Pollination and Plant Resources Change the Nutritional Quality of Almonds for Human Health, Claire Brittain , Claire Kremen, Andrea Garber, Alexandra-Maria Klein, Published: February 27, 2014, DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0090082, <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0090082>