

Coevolution Institute (CoE) Statement, Senate Ag Cmte Hearing on Conservation Policy Recommendations for the Farm Bill—Executive Summary¹

Insect and other animal pollinators play a part in the production of food that humans eat—with estimates as high as one out of every three bites—and in the reproduction of at least 80 percent of flowering plants. Commodities produced with the help of animal pollinators generate significant income for agricultural producers. For example, domestic honeybees pollinate an estimated \$14.6 billion worth of crops in the U.S. each year, produced on more than 2,000,000 acres. It is thus in the strong economic interest of both agricultural producers and the American consumer to help ensure a healthy, sustainable pollinator population. Today, possible declines in the health and population of pollinators in North America and globally pose what could be a significant threat to the integrity of biodiversity, to global food webs, and to human health.

Even as efforts are appropriately focused on how to address Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) and meet farmers' vital pollinator needs, CCD alerts us to the simple but significant fact that **we can no longer take honeybees and other animal pollinators for granted**. As a major National Academy of Sciences report recommends, we must improve our scientific understanding, increase awareness about the amazing world of pollinators and their importance to our food supply and healthy ecosystems, and take action to protect pollinators and their habitat. We do know that forces like habitat destruction, improper use of pesticides, invasive species and global warming are placing our pollinator world at risk.

CoE RECOMMENDS “POLLINATING” FARM BILL CONSERVATION/OTHER PROGRAMS:

Existing Farm Bill conservation, forest management, research and other programs designed to work with and assist farm, ranch and forest land managers can be strengthened to better address managed and native pollinator needs by adding targeted authorizing and supporting report language to current program authorities in the next Farm Bill. Pollinators, agriculture and healthy ecosystems deserve no less. This is NOT a request for *new* programs, but rather *enhancements* to existing programs as a pragmatic approach to yield meaningful results.

Candidate programs include the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the Conservation Security Program (CSP), the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), the Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program, the Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP), the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and the Watershed Rehabilitation Program. Similar opportunities exist in other Farm Bill programs, such as research and extension and forestry.

EQIP Example: In authorizing language for EQIP [P.L. 107-171, Subtitle D], additional direction and clarification of authority regarding pollinators could be provided through insertion of “or pollinators” at the end of Section 1240(b), (e)(2), so that it would read: “In determining the amount and rate of incentive payments, the Secretary may accord great significance to a practice that promotes residue, nutrient, pest invasive species, or air quality management, **or pollinator habitat and protection.**”

Pollinator protection could be designated as a priority resource concern, and added as a credit in scoring applications for cost-share assistance. Report language could be included to encourage and direct conservation assistance and technical service providers to make producers aware of pollinator-friendly practices.

The mission of CoE is to catalyze stewardship of biodiversity. CoE places a high priority on efforts to protect and enhance animal pollinators (invertebrates, birds and mammals) and their habitats in both working and wild lands. More information about CoE may be accessed at www.coevolution.org. CoE facilitates the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC), a tri-national collaboration working to promote awareness and scientific understanding of pollinators; gather, organize and disseminate information about pollinators; provide a forum to identify and discuss pollinator issues; and promote projects, initiatives and activities that enhance pollinators. For more information about NAPPC, go to <http://www.napcc.org>.

BEE Ready for National Pollinator Week, June 24-30, 2007. Events are being planned in our Nation's capitol and throughout the country to celebrate and raise public awareness about our pollinating partners and the need to take actions that protect pollinators and their habitat. For more information, go to <http://www.pollinator.org>.

¹ Full Statement and other information can be accessed at http://pollinator.org/farm_bill.htm.