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July 30, 2008—Via E-mail

The Honorable Arlen Lancaster, Chief
Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Teresa C. Lasseter, Administrator
Farm Service Agency
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250

RE: Implementing Pollinator Provisions in New Farm Bill Conservation Title

Dear Chief Lancaster and Administrator Lasseter:

As the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) move forward with rulemaking and administrative decisions to implement new provisions in the Conservation Title of the recently enacted 2008 Farm Bill, the Pollinator Partnership (P2) would like to offer recommendations on the new pollinator-related provisions. P2 appreciates that the U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service) is also involved in working on conservation on private forest lands. While P2 does not comment specifically on applicable Forest Service programs, we hope many of our comments may prove to have value to the Forest Service.

Interest of the Pollinator Partnership: P2 is a nonprofit organization headquartered in San Francisco, California. P2's mission is to catalyze stewardship of biodiversity. P2 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. P2 facilitates the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC), an ad hoc, tri-national collaboration involving scientists, stakeholders and agency officials working together on consensus-based efforts for the benefit of pollinators.

*****P2 Recommendations in Brief*****

1. Make maximum use of the full range of existing conservation programs to encourage pollinator habitat and pollinator-friendly production practices. Examples—
 - Encourage ecoregion-based, pollinator-beneficial native plants in CRP plantings.
 - Bonus eligibility points for pollinator-beneficial practices when applying for programs.
 - CRP rental rate premium for including pollinator habitat.
 - Appropriately reward producers for pollinator-beneficial practices in CSP.
 - Incorporate appropriate pollinator-beneficial measures in other conservation programs.
2. Include specific mention of pollinator habitat and pollinator-beneficial best management practices to the maximum extent practicable in updating Conservation Practice Standards.
3. Include Pollinator Habitat in EQIP Special Rule involving payments for foregone income.
4. Collaborate with USDA Research re pollinator conservation research & extension needs.
5. Support P2 collaborative efforts to disseminate new Ecoregional Planting Guides for Pollinators to farmers, ranchers, homeowners and public land managers.

Farm Bill Pollinator Provisions: P2 applauds Congress for including pollinator-beneficial provisions in the research, conservation and specialty crops titles of the recently enacted Farm Bill. A summary of the legislative language and statement of managers related to pollinators is provided in Attachment 1. P2 commends the NRCS Native Plant Data Center, The Xerces Society and San Francisco State University for collaborating to produce “Using Farm Bill Conservation Programs for Pollinator Conservation.” This reference document provides a comprehensive evaluation of pollinator conservation opportunities in the array of conservation programs.

In the Conservation Title, the new Farm Bill encourages and directs NRCS and the Farm Services Administration (FSA) as the implementing agencies to take action in three basic areas:

1. Encourage the development of habitat and conservation practices that benefit native and managed pollinators in carrying out any conservation program.
2. Factor in the needs of native and managed pollinators when reviewing and updating conservation practice standards.
3. Accord great significance to foregone income as a result of a producer’s efforts to establish pollinator habitat in determining the type and amount of payments under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

In the Statement of Managers, Congress recognizes the value of pollinators and the ag pollination services they provide and provides additional direction to USDA in implementing the pollinator conservation provisions. In particular—

“The Managers see conservation programs as an important tool for creating, restoring, and enhancing pollinator habitat quantity and quality. The Managers expect the Secretary to encourage, within appropriate conservation programs, measures to benefit pollinators and their habitat, such as using plant species mixes in conservation plantings to provide pollinator food and shelter; establishing field borders, hedgerows, and shelterbelts to provide habitat in proximity to crops; establishing corridors that can expand and connect important pollinator habitat patches; and encouraging related pollinator-friendly production practices.” [Statement of managers, pp.64-5]

The focused objective of targeted modifications to authorizing language in the Conservation Title is to better equip and direct USDA to help farmers, ranchers, foresters and others incorporate pollinator needs in their conservation efforts. The full potential of these provisions should be pursued in the development of proposed rules, interim final rules and final rules as well as any administrative efforts not requiring formal rulemaking. Pollinators, agriculture and healthy ecosystems deserve no less.

P2 Implementing Recommendations:

1. **P2 RECOMMENDATION:** Make maximum use of the full range of existing conservation programs to encourage pollinator habitat and pollinator-friendly production practices.

Supporting Rationale: The final statutory language agreed to by the conferees unfortunately included a last minute change from “shall” to “may, as applicable” in providing direction to the Secretary when it comes to encouraging the development of habitat and conservation practices that benefit native and managed pollinators. However, as validated by language in the Statement of Managers, P2 believes the Managers are clearly expecting USDA and implementing agencies to take full advantage of applicable authorities in conservation programs to encourage measures to benefit pollinators and their habitat.

P2 believes that, with the exception of the farmland protection program, every conservation program in the USDA conservation toolbox can and should be “pollinated” to encourage measures to benefit pollinators and their habitat. This includes both native pollinators and managed bees.

The **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)**, the nationwide **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)** and the **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** are major programs where pollinator conservation opportunities abound. For example—

- **Farmers and ranchers should be encouraged to include pollinator-beneficial native plants in planting mixes for land placed under CRP contracts**, including continuous signups for buffers.
 - Like other aspects of agriculture, no one size fits all. Pollinator-plant relationships are *place-based, varying by ecoregion*. P2 has collaborated with a number of partners to develop a system of ecoregional planting guides for pollinators (discussed in further detail later in these comments). These guides, along with other resources, such as those available through the NRCS Plant Materials Center, could be used as tools to help ensure technical assistance providers and producers have the information needed to make good, informed decisions.
 - Information should be developed and provided about *where suitable and affordable seed mixes can be obtained*.
 - For the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and where tree plantings are involved, pollinator-beneficial *trees, shrubs and forbs* could be identified and their inclusion encouraged.
- **Producers implementing and/or maintaining pollinator-beneficial practices should be eligible for incentives and financial assistance.**
 - *Bonus eligibility points* could be provided in the CRP and CREP contract bidding process to producers who commit to including recommended pollinator-beneficial plantings and practices. A pilot project undertaken by Montana NRCS showed excellent interest and response.
 - A CRP *rental rate premium* could be considered for pollinator-beneficial habitats.
 - Pollinator-beneficial habitats and practices should be specifically recognized and appropriately *awarded in setting CSP payment levels*, especially where ag pollination services are needed or are critical to addressing wildlife ecosystem challenges.
 - It should be made clear under EQIP eligibility criteria that producers are eligible for cost-share assistance to help underwrite the additional costs of establishing pollinator-beneficial habitat.

In addition to major programs, *other programs offer potential that should be utilized*. For example—

- **Conservation Innovation Grants** [encourage innovative pollinator habitat approaches & incentives].
- **Wetlands Reserve Program** [subset of wildlife habitat conservation objective in WRP, excellent opportunity to ‘pollinate’ habitat management plans].
- **Grassland Reserve Program** [enhances stated goals of wildlife conservation & restoration programs, can be critical to biodiversity of native flowering plants].
- **Conservation of Private Grazing Land** [pollinator needs could be considered in natural resource management planning] and **Grazing Land Conservation Initiative**.
- **Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative** [consideration of pollinator needs should be encouraged in any cooperative conservation initiative related to land and habitat conservation].
- **Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program** [pollinators & pollinator habitat increasingly recognized as vital components of successful wildlife ecosystems].
- **Grassroots Source Water Protection Program** [opportunity to incorporate pollinator-beneficial native plants and practices in management program].
- **Emergency Landscape Protection Program** [restoration to damage from catastrophic events, opportunity to incorporate pollinator-beneficial habitat and practices in furthering the stated objective of restoration of wildlife and habitat corridors].
- **Natural Resources Inventory and Conservation Effects Assessment Project** [Pollinator Habitat vs. habitat needs could be one of natural resources inventoried/assessed].
- **Environmental Services Market** [consider economic value of pollination ecosystem services].
- **Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program** [consider pollinators/habitat].

Each of these programs has other primary missions. Yet pollinator-beneficial practices can be incorporated into program implementation where appropriate without interfering with the primary objectives—and indeed would likely strengthen the conservation value of each program where included.

Conservation programs can be highly effective in addressing factors which can contribute to pollinator declines including: habitat fragmentation, loss, and degradation causing a reduction of food sources and sites for mating, nesting, roosting, and migration; improper use of pesticides and herbicides; aggressive competition from non-native species; disease, predators, and parasites; climate change; and lack of floral diversity. Effective pollinator protection practices often overlap and complement other conservation practices, particularly those designed to improve wildlife habitat, and vice versa. In other instances, a practice designed to achieve wildlife or other conservation practices could generate significant pollinator benefits by integrating modest enhancements. It is important to recognize that pollinator habitat conservation is increasingly important to providing natural sources of nutrition to managed honey bees. For example, more commercial beekeepers are reportedly now placing their hives on CRP lands between periods of commercial crop pollination as a source of forage and nutrition.

It is well established that the demand for conservation outcomes far exceeds available resources. Therefore, it is important to make a conscious effort to gain multiple conservation benefits through each program where practicable. P2 encourages NRCS and FSA to work proactively on a priority basis consistent with the urgency of ag pollinator challenges to utilize the full range of programs as appropriate to encourage conservation measures to benefit pollinators and their habitat, and the agricultural producers and wildlife ecosystems that depend on insect pollinators.

2. **P2 RECOMMENDATION:** Make it a priority to include specific mention of pollinator habitat and pollinator-beneficial best management practices to the maximum extent practicable in updating Conservation Practice Standards.

Supporting Rationale: The new Farm Bill specifically references “native and managed pollinators” in ensuring local needs met when reviewing Conservation Practice Standards. While P2 recognizes the importance of stakeholder input to the review process when proposals are circulated, NRCS is urged to pursue a coordinated effort to identify and include measures that will benefit native and managed pollinators in proposed and final Conservation Practice Standards. Enhancing and sustaining pollinator conservation practices on the landscape is essential to any long-term solution to pollinator health and the effectiveness of ag pollination.

3. **P2 RECOMMENDATION:** Include Pollinator Habitat in the EQIP Special Rule involving payments for foregone income.

Supporting Rationale: The new Farm Bill specifically includes reference to Pollinator Habitat in the EQIP Special Rule provision. P2 believes most pollinator habitat conservation practices can be implemented with little or no adverse impact on producer income. However, if a producer does incur lost income due to voluntary implementation of pollinator habitat conservation practices, P2 believes an adjustment in EQIP payments for such foregone income is entirely appropriate given the broad ecosystem services benefits that pollinators provide.

4. **P2 RECOMMENDATION:** Collaborate with USDA Research agencies re pollinator habitat and practices research and extension needs.

Supporting Rationale: Much remains to be learned about what works for pollinators and for producers. NRCS and FSA should ask the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) to underwrite *research and extension* needed to provide information about the most cost- and pollinator-effective mixes and densities of seed mixes and plantings. Variations will of course exist by ecoregion and type of farm and landscape.

The new Farm Bill includes a new pollinator protection research provision that specifically references habitat conservation and best management practices: “...to promote the health of honey bees and native pollinators through habitat conservation and best management practices.” P2 is pleased that USDA has been moving forward on several fronts to conduct and fund comprehensive pollinator research. Even though motivated by the threats of Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) to managed honey bees, USDA leaders recognize that the challenges to the health of ag pollinators is much broader. In addition to the research being conducted by ARS and the USDA CCD Task Force, CSREES recently awarded a –year CAP grant under the National Research Initiative to fund integrated research and extension efforts at a dozen universities. This includes research on habitat and best management practices that contribute to pollinator health.

P2 urges NRCS and FSA to collaborate closely with CSREES and ARS to ensure the research and extension provide the outcomes needed by the conservation agencies and farmers and ranchers to implement the most effective conservation and habitat practices possible, and that meaningful outcomes are incorporated into NRCS technical assistance and conservation practice guides as expeditiously as possible.

5. **P2 RECOMMENDATION:** Support P2 collaborative efforts to disseminate new Ecoregional Planting Guides for Pollinators to farmers, ranchers, homeowners and public land managers.

Supporting Rationale: . P2 has found that concerned citizens from all walks of life, including farmers and ranchers, are hungry for ways they can take action now to help pollinators. To empower stakeholders with the information needed to move forward with pollinator habitat conservation efforts on the ground, during National Pollinator Week 2008 P2 launched the first six in a new series of practical Ecoregional Guides, “**Selecting Plants for Pollinators.**” There are 35 ecoregions in the United States, and within two years there will be a guide released for each ecoregion. Two additional guides were released earlier this month, and two new guides each will be released in August and September. These guides are intended to be practical tools for farmers, ranchers, gardeners and public land managers who want to establish habitat for honey bees and native pollinators through native plants that are specific to their own region. Resources are sorely lacking to conduct the outreach and partnering needed to realize the potential of this ‘grassroots’ tool.

Pollinator habitat conservation is essential to any comprehensive, sustainable solution. While the science needed to address CCD and other pollinator health challenges is still being developed, one area where the science is already clear is that habitat is an important component to the health of both honey bees and native pollinators, and that habitat losses have contributed to the declining health of pollinators

Each guide provides plant-pollinator information *specific to that ecoregion*, including (1) Bloom periods; (2) Native plants that attract pollinators; and (3) Habitat hints. Finally, each guide provides additional resources and tips, including (1) Habitat and nesting requirements different pollinators; (2) Basic checklist; and (3) Where to access additional information.

The guides are available in downloadable form for free at <http://www.pollinator.org> along with information about how to use them. All users need is their zip code, and our online Zip Code Habitat Locator will connect them to their ecosystem map and guide. If a guide is not yet available, the user can enter an e-mail address and receive an alert when it becomes available.

The ecoregional guides were inspired by “Montana Native Plants for Pollinator-Friendly Plantings,” a pamphlet published in 2005 by NRCS in Montana under the leadership of David White, State Conservationist. The pamphlet was offered to farmers and ranchers and nurseries. On a trial basis, the State NRCS offered bonus eligibility points in selected programs like the Environmental Quality

Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) to farmers and ranchers who opted to include pollinator habitat in their conservation efforts. P2 is conducting a follow up study under a Conservation Innovation Grant from the Montana NRCS—including a survey, field visits and a demonstration site to determine how well the program worked and how it could be made better in the future. One thing we have learned from this initiative is that native plantings differ in different parts of Montana. This helped prompt our effort to look for better approaches, which ultimately led to the ecoregional planting guides. P2 hopes to collaborate with NRCS, using the Montana pamphlet and information in the ecoregional guides, to develop similar user-friendly pamphlets in other states.

P2 opted not to develop guide by state or watershed or conservation district or other more familiar geographic delineation because scientists in USDA and elsewhere advised that plants and pollinators don't "think" along such boundaries. Scientists recommended instead that we use an established system of ecoregions that could be used to match native plants and pollinators. Ecoregions (ecological regions, or bioregions) denote areas of general similarity in ecosystems and in the type, quality, and quantity of environmental resources. The biodiversity of flora, fauna (including pollinators) and ecosystems that characterize an ecoregion tend to be distinct from that of other ecoregions. These general purpose regions are critical for structuring and implementing ecosystem management strategies across federal agencies, state agencies, and nongovernment organizations that are responsible for different types of resources within the same geographical areas.

The guides are being funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the C.S. Fund, the Plant Conservation Alliance, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management. P2 is providing oversight. NAPPC volunteers have provided expertise in the development of the guides. The concept was also reviewed by a number of agencies and trade associations like the American Farm Bureau Federation and the National Garden Association.

It is important to emphasize that the guides are *science-based* and that great care has been taken to *avoid including any invasive species* in selecting the recommended lists of native plants specific to each ecoregion. The guides will undergo continuing review and can be readily updated since they are maintained online.

P2 believes the Ecoregional Guides can serve as an excellent "technical assistance" resource to help NRCS work with farmers and ranchers include pollinator habitat in their conservation efforts. P2 would be pleased to work with NRCS on appropriate ways to integrate awareness and use of this tool into the agency's programs and making technical assistance providers aware of this resource. Toward this same end, P2 recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), during National Pollinator Week. A major focus of this new MOU will be to work through the local conservation districts to get the word out about the Ecoregional Guides.

Pollinator Conservation Action a Priority

At a June 26, 2008, hearing on pollinator health convened by the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Horticulture and Organic Agriculture, USDA, P2 and other witnesses testified about the importance of honey bees, native bees and other ag pollinators and that pollinators are at risk due to Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) in honey bees and a number of other issues threatening the health of all pollinators.

Insect and other animal pollinators play a pivotal 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. The commodities produced with the help of animal pollinators generate significant income for agricultural producers. For example, domestic honey bees pollinate an estimated \$15 billion worth of crops in the U.S. each year, produced on more than 2 million acres.

It is increasingly recognized that native bees also contribute significantly, providing “free” ag pollination services. Recent estimates credit native pollinators for providing about \$3 billion annually in crop pollination services.

About 900,000 rented colonies are employed to pollinate 500,000 acres of just one major cash crop, almonds, grown in California—and that acreage is increasing. Producers of other specialty crops are increasingly concerned about the reliability and cost of pollination services. Availability and reliability of pollination services are the top priority to producers—simply stated, *no pollination, no crop!*

The cost for pollination services as a purchased agricultural input has *actually increased at a higher rate than energy prices* over the past several years. The availability and reliability of these pollination services are no longer certain. It is thus in the economic interest of both agriculture and American consumers to help ensure a healthy, sustainable population of honey bees and native pollinators.

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. A number of pollinator species are at risk. Due to several reported factors, the number of commercially managed honey bee colonies in the U.S. has declined from 5.9 million in the 1940’s to 4.3 million in 1985 and 2.5 million in 1998. All indications are the problem has worsened in recent years. Habitat loss was identified as a serious problem adversely affecting the nutrition and health of honey bees and other pollinators. Actions to provide improved habitat for pollinators were pointed to as vital to improving the health of honey bees and native pollinators.

Concern About Backward Steps in Conservation: P2 is concerned that even as we work to implement strengthened conservation provisions in the new Farm Bill backward steps are occurring in our nation’s quest to improve habitat for pollinators and other wildlife. While CRP was being increased to 35 million acres over the last 15 years, a study last year indicates 25 million acres of grasslands habitat were plowed and put into production during the same period. Record commodity prices and additional bioenergy incentives are forces that will likely exacerbate the loss of grasslands habitat.

Recent decisions to open CRP lands to haying and grazing seek to address nesting needs but fail to take into consideration pollinator forage habitat needs. In addition to the implications for native pollinators, CRP lands have become important sites for honey bee forage for commercial beekeepers. According to one estimate by a leader in the beekeeping industry about 40% of the commercial hives were placed on CRP lands for forage last year.

It is widely anticipated that more CRP lands will be placed back into production as current contracts expire. The statutory cap has been lowered, and few expect any significant new CRP enrollments in an era of high commodity prices and bioenergy incentives. The current policy debate about penalty-free CRP early outs suggests that commodity economics are trumping conservation economics. While recognizing that producers have the right to exercise an early out, P2 has joined other groups in opposing penalty-free early outs.

These challenging dynamics make it even more imperative that USDA and the implementing conservation agencies move aggressively to help and encourage farmers and ranchers to integrate pollinator habitat and pollinator-beneficial best management practices into their conservation efforts on remaining CRP, field edge and working lands. This includes integrating pollinator habitat into lands where bioenergy is to be produced.

P2 stands ready to support such efforts. P2 is privileged to have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the two leading natural resource agencies—NRCS and the Forest Service. The MOUs signal a commitment to work together for the benefit of pollinators and pollinator habitat conservation. NRCS is also a highly valued participant in NAPPC. P2 would welcome the opportunity to explore similar collaborative efforts with FSA. We look forward to working with NRCS, FSA, the Forest Service, and stakeholders representing farmers and ranchers to help realize the potential of the pollinator conservation provisions of the new Farm Bill.

Respectfully Submitted,



Laurie Davies Adams
Executive Director

CC: The Honorable Gail Kimbell, Chief, U.S. Forest Service
Lowell Randel, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Congressional Relations
Floyd Gaibler, Deputy Undersecretary, Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services
W. Scott Steele, Director, Office of Budget and Program Analysis

Farm Bill Conference Report, Pollinator-Beneficial Provisions

*Pollinator Partnership Preliminary Analysis*¹

CONSERVATION

Administrative Requirements for Conservation Programs (P. 161)

“(h) ENCOURAGEMENT OF POLLINATOR HABITAT DEVELOPMENT

AND PROTECTION.—In carrying out any conservation program administered by the Secretary, the Secretary may, as appropriate, encourage—

“(1) the development of habitat for native and managed pollinators; and

“(2) the use of conservation practices that benefit native and managed pollinators.

Statement of Managers (PP. 64-5):

Despite their value, native pollinators such as bees, butterflies, moths, flies, beetles, bats, or hummingbirds often are under-appreciated in terms of their contributions to the U.S. agricultural sector. Insect-pollinated crops directly contributed \$20,000,000,000 to the United States economy in 2000 alone. The Managers recognize that many native pollinator groups, particularly those important to agriculture, are facing a serious risk of decline as a result of habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation, among other factors.

The Managers see conservation programs as an important tool for creating, restoring, and enhancing pollinator habitat quantity and quality. The Managers expect the Secretary to encourage, within appropriate conservation programs, measures to benefit pollinators and their habitat, such as using plant species mixes in conservation plantings to provide pollinator food and shelter; establishing field borders, hedgerows, and shelterbelts to provide habitat in proximity to crops; establishing corridors that can expand and connect important pollinator habitat patches; and encouraging related pollinator-friendly production practices. (Section 2708 of Conference substitute)

P2 NOTE: *While the Statement of Managers first paragraph talks about native pollinators, the legislative language encompasses both native and managed pollinators, and the second paragraph in the Statement of Managers obviously applies to habitat and practices that can benefit both.*

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) (p. 140)

“(3) SPECIAL RULE INVOLVING PAYMENTS FOR FOREGONE INCOME.—

In determining the amount and rate of payments under paragraph (2)(B), the Secretary may accord great significance to a practice that, as determined by the Secretary, promotes—

“(A) residue management;

“(B) nutrient management;

“(C) air quality management;

“(D) invasive species management;

“(E) pollinator habitat;

“(F) animal carcass management technology; or

“(G) pest management.”

Review of Conservation Practice Standards (p. 157)

¹ Page references to legislative language posted at

<http://agriculture.house.gov/inside/Legislation/110/FB/Conf/CRIlang.pdf> and Statement of Managers posted at http://agriculture.house.gov/inside/Legislation/110/FB/Conf/statement_of_managers.pdf.

*“(B) ensure, to the maximum extent practicable, the completeness and relevance of the standards to local agricultural, forestry, and natural resource needs, including specialty crops, **native and managed pollinators**, bioenergy crop production, forestry, and such other needs as are determined by the Secretary; and...”*

RESEARCH

Pollinator Research (PP. 353-4)

*“(h) **POLLINATOR PROTECTION.—***

*“(1) **RESEARCH AND EXTENSION.—***

*“(A) **GRANTS.—Research and extension grants may be made under this section—***

“(i) to survey and collect data on bee colony production and health;

“(ii) to investigate pollinator biology, immunology, ecology, genomics, and bioinformatics;

“(iii) to conduct research on various factors that may be contributing to or associated with colony collapse disorder, and other serious threats to the health of honey bees and other pollinators, including—

“(I) parasites and pathogens of pollinators; and

“(II) the sublethal effects of insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides on honey bees and native and managed pollinators;

“(iv) to develop mitigative and preventative measures to improve native and managed pollinator health; and

“(v) to promote the health of honey bees and native pollinators through habitat conservation and best management practices.

*“(B) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this paragraph \$10,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.***

*“(2) **DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE CAPACITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE.—***

*“(A) **IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall, to the maximum extent practicable, increase the capacity and infrastructure of the Department—***

“(i) to address colony collapse disorder and other long-term threats to pollinator health, including the hiring of additional personnel; and

“(ii) to conduct research on colony collapse disorder and other pollinator issues at the facilities of the Department.

*“(B) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this paragraph \$7,250,000 for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.***

*“(3) **HONEY BEE PEST AND PATHOGEN SURVEILLANCE.—***

There is authorized to be appropriated to conduct a nationwide honey bee pest and pathogen surveillance program \$2,750,000 for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

*“(4) **ANNUAL REPORT ON RESPONSE TO HONEY BEE COLONY***

COLLAPSE DISORDER.—The Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate an annual report describing the progress made by the Department

of Agriculture in—

“(A) investigating the cause or causes of honey bee colony collapse; and

“(B) finding appropriate strategies to reduce colony loss.

Statement of Managers (PP. 322-3):

The Conference substitute adopts the House provision with an amendment to move the research-related items of this provision to the research title of this Act to amend section 1672 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 5925), and to move the conservation-related item of this provision to the conservation title of this Act.. (Section 7204)

(40) Pollinator protection

The House bill cites this section as the “Pollinator Protection Act of 2007”. It states Congress’ findings regarding the importance of bee pollination to agriculture and the concerns related to colony collapse disorder in the bee population. The provision authorizes appropriations, as follows:

- For the Agricultural Research Service at USDA – \$3 million for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012 for new personnel, facilities improvement, and additional research at the USDA Bee Research Laboratories; \$2.5 million for each of fiscal years 2008 and 2009 for research on honey and native bee physiology, and other research; and \$1.75 million for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2010.
- For an area-wide research program to identify causes and solutions for colony collapse disorder.
- For the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service – \$10 million to fund grants to investigate honey bee biology, immunology, ecology, genomics, bioinformatics, crop pollination and habitat conservation, the effects of insecticides, herbicides and fungicides, and other research.
- For the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service – \$2.25 million for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012 to conduct a honey bee pest and pathogen surveillance program.

The House bill requires the Secretary to submit a report to Congress on the status and progress of bee research projects. It amends the Food Security Act of 1985 to require the Secretary, when carrying out a conservation program other than the farmland protection program, to establish a priority and provide incentives for increasing habitat for pollinators and to establish practices to protect native and managed pollinators. (Section 11315)

Specialty Crop Research Initiative (P. 361)

“(b) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established within the Department a specialty crop research and extension initiative to address the critical needs of the specialty crop industry by developing and disseminating science-based tools to address needs of specific crops and their regions, including—

“(1) research in plant breeding, genetics, and genomics to improve crop characteristics, such as—

“(A) product, taste, quality, and appearance;

“(B) environmental responses and tolerances;

“(C) nutrient management, including plant nutrient uptake efficiency;

“(D) pest and disease management, including resistance to pests and diseases resulting in reduced application management strategies; and

“(E) enhanced phytonutrient content;

“(2) efforts to identify and address threats from pests and diseases, including threats to specialty crop pollinators;...

Statement of Managers (P. 191):

The House bill adds a new section, 413, to AREERA that establishes the Specialty Crop Research Initiative to develop and disseminate science-based tools to address the needs of specific crops and their regions, including work in plant breeding and genetics, safety, quality, and yield; efforts to identify and address threats posed by invasive species; marketing; **pollination**; and

The Conference substitute adopts the House provision...

OTHER—HONEY BEES

Apiary Insurance (PP. 508-9)

“(14) APIARY POLICIES.—The Corporation shall offer to enter into a contract with a qualified entity to carry out research and development regarding insurance policies that cover loss of bees.”

Supplemental Disaster Assistance (p. 513)

*“(C) HONEY.—In the case of honey, the term ‘farm’ means, in relation to an eligible producer on a farm, all **bees and beehives** in all counties that are intended to be harvested for a honey crop by the eligible producer.”*

Disaster Assistance (p. 522)

*“(e) EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR LIVESTOCK, **HONEY BEES**, AND FARM-RAISED FISH.—*

*“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall use up to \$50,000,000 per year from the Trust Fund to provide emergency relief to eligible producers of livestock, **honey bees**, and farmraised fish to aid in the reduction of losses due to disease, adverse weather, or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires, as determined by the Secretary, that are not covered under subsection (b), (c), or (d).”*

Title IX, Supplemental Ag Disaster Assistance (p. 607)

“(C) HONEY.—In the case of honey, the term ‘farm’ means, in relation to an eligible producer on a farm, all bees and beehives in all counties that are intended to be harvested for a honey crop by the eligible producer.”

Supplemental Disaster Assistance (p. 616)

*“(e) EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR LIVESTOCK, **HONEY BEES**, AND FARM-RAISED FISH.—*

*“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall use up to \$50,000,000 per year from the Trust Fund to provide emergency relief to eligible producers of livestock, **honey bees**, and farmraised fish to aid in the reduction of losses due to disease, adverse weather, or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires, as determined by the Secretary, that are not covered under subsection (b), (c), or (d).”*

Statement of Managers (PP. 337-43)

For the above 4 provisions, SEE explanation of the disaster assistance programs and inclusion of beekeepers in this section.

Excerpts Edited May 14