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Financial Assistance Programs Division
Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW-Room 5237-S
Washington, DC 20250-2890

**RE: Comments on Docket Number NRCS-IFR-08005
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Interim Final Rule**

The Pollinator Partnership (P2) is pleased to respond to the request by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for public input on the agency's interim final rule for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Docket Number NRCS-IFR-08005.

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. More information about P2/NAPPC is available at <http://www.pollinator.org/>.

P2 RECOMMENDATIONS

To facilitate implementation of the new 2008 farm bill pollinator administrative requirements for conservation provisions related to encouragement of pollinator habitat development and protection for native and managed pollinators, P2 recommends the following re EQIP and related programs—

- **EQIP Eligibility re Practices Benefiting Native and Managed Pollinators.** Update and incorporate language in EQIP regulations and related documents as appropriate to make it clear that development of habitat and use of conservation practices that benefit native and managed pollinators are eligible for assistance under EQIP.
- **Native and Managed Pollinators Priority Resource Concern.** Identify habitat for native and managed pollinators as a national priority resource concern, and encourage State NRCS offices to make a similar determination, especially where habitat deficits are recognized as a limiting element for managed and native ag pollinators and pollinators in at-risk wildlife ecosystems.
- **EQIP Level and Rate of Payments, and Bonus Eligibility Points for Pollinator Practices.** Consider encouraging implementation of habitat development and protection for native and managed pollinators by (1) providing increased levels and percentages of cost-share assistance where appropriate; and (2) awarding bonus eligibility points for EQIP applications, especially where managed and native pollinators are important providers of ag pollination services and/or are critical to addressing wildlife ecosystem challenges.
- **Incorporating Practices Benefiting Native and Managed Pollinators in Conservation Practice Standards.** Ensure updates and revisions to Conservation Practice Standards move forward on an expedited basis to assure the appropriateness and relevance of the standards to the local habitat and conservation practices needs of native and managed pollinators.

- **Research on Habitat and Conservation Practices for Pollinators.** Provide input to USDA, CSREES and ARS about additional research needed to improve the science about habitat and conservation practices that are best for native and managed pollinators.
- **Foregone Income.** 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 EQIP.
- **Bioenergy and Climate Change and Pollinator Conservation.** The Notice specifically requests public input “.....on how EQIP can achieve its program purposes and further the Nation’s efforts with renewable energy production, energy conservation, mitigating the effects of climate change, facilitating climate change adaptation, or reducing net carbon emissions.”
 - Utilize EQIP to provide incentives to encourage agricultural producers to include habitat for native and managed pollinators where bioenergy feedstocks are produced, and to increase habitat for native and managed pollinators where possible to offset losses resulting from increased agricultural production, reductions in CRP acreage and losses of grasslands to crop production.
 - Utilize EQIP to help provide incentives to agricultural producers to help create appropriate “*conservation corridors*” for pollinators that will help mitigate the adverse effects of climate change by providing habitat and forage corridors by pollinators as they seek to migrate to adapt to climate changes. Increased habitat for native and managed pollinators also helps address climate change by capturing carbon.

SUPPORTING RATIONALE

Farm Bill Conservation Provisions for Native and Managed Pollinators: P2 applauds Congress for including pollinator-beneficial provisions for native and managed pollinators in the conservation, research and specialty crops titles of the 2008 farm bill [SEE attached Exhibit]. P2’s recommendations on EQIP are motivated by how NRCS can realize the potential of the new conservation provisions for native and managed pollinators. The key provision that covers EQIP, and indeed the full range of USDA conservation programs, follows:

Administrative Requirements for Conservation Programs

“(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.

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.”

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. 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. P2 urges that NRCS pursue the full potential of these provisions 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.

EQIP Eligibility Criteria: Regulatory language and explanations of EQIP eligibility criteria should be enhanced to make it clear that producers are eligible for cost-share assistance to help underwrite the additional costs of establishing pollinator-beneficial habitat and conservation practices for native and managed pollinators.

National Priorities: Habitat for native and managed pollinators should be identified as a national priority resource concern. Currently the national priorities focus almost exclusively on soil erosion, quality and conservation and air emissions. The only reference to species conservation is in regards to “at risk species habitat conservation.” Both native and managed pollinators are arguably at risk; and honey bees and many native bees together represent a major agricultural input, in particular for many specialty crops.

Conservation Practice Standards: The 2008 farm bill specifically references “native and managed pollinators” in ensuring local needs are met when reviewing Conservation Practice Standards. These standards represent the technical references that are used to determine the technical advice that is provided to ag producers and what practices are eligible for cost-share assistance and other incentives under EQIP and other programs. Enhancing and sustaining pollinator conservation practices on the landscape are essential to any long-term solution to pollinator health and the effectiveness of ag pollination services.

While P2 recognizes the importance of stakeholder input to the review process when proposed changes to Conservation Practice Standards are circulated, P2 urges NRCS to pursue a coordinated effort to identify and include measures that will benefit native and managed pollinators in proposed, revised and final Conservation Practice Standards. There is early evidence that significant progress is being made to incorporate habitat plantings for native pollinators. P2 urges that a conscious commitment be made to *recognizing and incorporating forage needs for honey bees and other managed pollinators*, including to the extent appropriate larger scale practices that may be needed.

Research: Much remains to be learned about what works for native and managed pollinators, and for producers. The 2008 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 other pollinators.....**to promote the health of honey bees and native pollinators through habitat conservation and best management practices.**” Some research is underway, but much more needs to be undertaken. P2 urges NRCS to collaborate with CSREES and ARS to ensure that research and extension provide the outcomes needed by NRCS, technical service providers, and farmers and ranchers to implement the most effective conservation and habitat practices possible for native and managed pollinators, including appropriate mixes, densities and management practices for plantings for native and managed pollinators, and that meaningful outcomes are incorporated into NRCS Conservation Practice Standards and technical assistance efforts as expeditiously as possible. Variations will of course exist by ecoregion and type of farm and landscape.

Foregone Income: The new farm includes a special rule involving EQIP payments for foregone income that specifically mentions “pollinator habitat” in determinations re the amount and rate of payments. P2 submits most pollinator habitat conservation practices can be implemented with little or no adverse impact on producer income, and arguably economic benefits in instances where ag crop pollination services are needed by the producer. However, if a producer does incur lost income due to voluntary implementation of pollinator habitat conservation practices for native and managed pollinators, P2 believes an adjustment in EQIP payments for such foregone income is entirely appropriate given the broad ecosystem services benefits that pollinators provide.

POLLINATOR CONSERVATION MATTERS

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 *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.

Pollinator habitat conservation is essential to any comprehensive, sustainable solution. While the science needed to address CCD and other health challenges plaguing managed and native pollinators 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. This is why action through NRCS conservation programs is so timely and critical.

POLLINATING OTHER CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

P2 believes that every conservation program in the USDA conservation toolbox can and should be “pollinated” to encourage measures to benefit native and managed pollinators and their habitat. In addition to EQIP, *other conservation programs offer potential that should be utilized* to advance habitat and other conservation objectives for native and managed pollinators. For example—

- **Conservation Innovation Grants** [encourage innovative pollinator habitat approaches & incentives].
- **Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program** [pollinators & pollinator habitat increasingly recognized as vital components of successful wildlife ecosystems].
- **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].
- **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].
- **Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program** [consider bonus eligibility points for growers voluntarily committing to provide significant habitat for native and managed ag pollinators, and other pollinating species].
- **Conservation Stewardship Program** [credit for levels of pollinator habitat and stewardship toward stewardship payments].
- **Conservation Reserve Program** [*managed by Farm Services Administration, but NRCS influences by providing technical assistance and influences eligible plantings through Conservation Practices Standards, etc.*].

Each of the USDA programs has other primary missions. Yet practices that benefit native and managed pollinators 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 declines of native and managed pollinators, 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 practices for protecting native and managed pollinators 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 benefits for native and managed pollinators by integrating modest enhancements such as selections of pollinator-beneficial plants.

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 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 managed and native pollinators and their habitat, and the agricultural producers and wildlife ecosystems that depend on insect and other animal pollinators.

P2 is concerned that even as work proceeds to implement strengthened conservation provisions in the 2008 farm bill that *backward steps are occurring in our nation's quest to improve habitat for native and managed 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. It is widely anticipated that more CRP lands will be placed back into production as current contracts expire, and that additional grasslands will fall victim to the plow. The statutory cap has been lowered, and few expect any significant new CRP enrollments in an era of high commodity prices and bioenergy incentives.

These challenging dynamics make it even more imperative that NRCS move aggressively to help and encourage farmers and ranchers to integrate pollinator habitat and pollinator-beneficial best management practices for native and managed pollinators into their conservation efforts on conservation acreage, field edges and working lands.

Conservation for Managed Honey Bees: It is especially important to recognize that scientists and beekeepers alike increasingly recognize that pollinator habitat conservation is 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. While CRP is managed by the Farm Services Administration (FSA), NRCS plays a vital role through the Conservation Practice Standards and as the technical assistance provider. Other conservation lands and practices can provide good nutritional resources for honey bees. While there is a good body of work in place and in process that is focused on the habitat needs of native pollinators, P2 urges NRCS to make a concerted effort to ensure that the needs of honey bees and other managed ag pollinators receive commensurate conservation attention in the full menu of conservation programs as appropriate, including EQIP, consistent with the stated objectives of the 2008 farm bill.

Ecoregional Planting Guides for Pollinators: 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 a new series of practical Ecoregional Guides, "**Selecting Plants for Pollinators.**" By National Pollinator Week 2009, there will be a guide available for each ecoregion in the U.S. These guides are intended to be practical tools as a starting point 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.

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 map and guide.

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, then Montana State Conservationist. Montana NRCS piloted several incentives like bonus eligibility points for planting pollinator habitat when farmers applied for cost-share assistance. P2 applied for and was awarded a CIG by Montana NRCS to survey farmers’ efforts to plant for pollinators, where they got their information and what influenced their decisions. The report is available at <http://www.pollinator.org/montana.cig.htm>.

In expanding on this innovative approach, scientists recommended that P2 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 have been 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 has provided 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 Gardening Association. 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 are undergoing 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 as a starting point to help NRCS work with farmers and ranchers include habitat for native and managed pollinators 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 signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), during National Pollinator Week 2008. 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.

P2 stands ready to support the conservation efforts of NRCS in the EQIP and other programs as they are used to help benefit native and managed pollinators. P2 is privileged to have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NRCS. 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. We look forward to working with NRCS and stakeholders representing farmers and ranchers to help realize the potential of the pollinator conservation provisions of the 2008 farm bill for native and managed pollinators, as well as the farmers and wildlife ecosystems that depend on their pollination services.

Respectfully Submitted,



Laurie Davies Adams
Executive Director

Attachment

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.”

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.

Review of Conservation Practice Standards (p. 157)

*“(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

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, May 14, 2008