



State's Pollinator Protection Plan Ready for Review

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MADISON – Wisconsin's pollinator protection plan is now available for public review and comment. The comment period will remain open through Feb. 19.

The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) worked with the University of Wisconsin-Madison Entomology Department to develop the plan in response to risks facing pollinators. The plan consists of an analysis of scientific data about risks to pollinators, and recommended best management practices to protect pollinators.

"This plan offers science-based recommendations to beekeepers, gardeners and homeowners, farmers, and anyone with land that can provide habitat for pollinators. It is entirely voluntary; it is not a new set of regulations," said DATCP Secretary Ben Brancel. "We owe a debt of gratitude to our panel of stakeholders who spent hours considering the data and discussing the best management practices to protect pollinators. The time they spent helps us all, because pollinators mean food on our plates, millions of dollars in added crop values and thousands of jobs in Wisconsin."

The plan is available online at datcp.wi.gov; search for "pollinator protection plan" or email DATCPAgriculture@wisconsin.gov for a direct link. It is also available by writing to DATCP, ATTN Pollinator Protection Plan, PO Box 8911, Madison, WI 53708-8911.

You can comment through Friday, Feb. 19, by sending emails or written comments to the addresses above.

In Wisconsin, pollinators include managed non-native honey bees; more than 400 wild native species of bees; and other insects. All carry pollen between plants, fertilizing the plants so they produce fruit, vegetables and seeds. News stories have focused on population declines among managed colonies of honey bees, but some wild pollinators like bumble bees are also declining. Science suggests that a number of factors are in play. For honey bees, the risks include parasites, pathogens and lack of genetic diversity. Both honey bees and other pollinators are affected by loss of habitat, inadequate forage, and pesticide exposure.

The goals of the plan are to:

- Expand the quality and quantity of habitat for managed and wild pollinators
- Minimize stressors on managed and wild pollinators
- Improve managed hive health and survival
- Provide outreach about pollinator-friendly practices

After Secretary Brancel participated in discussions about pollinators with his counterparts in other state agriculture departments at the 2013 meeting of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, the department applied for and received a Specialty Crops Block Grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to develop the plan. The department contracted with University of Wisconsin-Madison researchers, who analyzed the scientific data and worked with DATCP staff and stakeholders to write the plan.

Stakeholders involved in developing the plan included commercial and hobbyist beekeepers, environmental groups, farmers, agribusinesses, pesticide manufacturers, commodity organizations, state and federal agencies and tribal governments. They met in three daylong meetings from August through November. ###