

Pollinator Protection Committee Meeting Minutes: DRAFT & UNAPPROVED

October 12, 2016-Vermont Statehouse Room 10

Committee members present

- Katie Ballard (KB)
- Eric Boire (EB)
- Terry Bradshaw (TB)-Chair
- Chris Conant (CC)
- Ross Conrad (RC)
- Cary Giguere (CG)
- John Hayden (JH)
- Mike Palmer (MP)
- Leif Richardson (LR)
- Jane Sorensen (JS)

Linda Boccuzzo-administrative (LB)

1. Meeting convened at 9:33 AM.
2. Motion to review/approve meeting minutes; Cary Giguere made motion to approve; Chris Conant seconded. Minutes were approved unanimously.

TB proposed his format for the meeting agendas. Each meeting agenda will have a review of the status of the charges. He hopes to be able to complete a few charges each meeting.

Discussion around how to handle documents. LB will serve as document manager and track version control.

TB asked that new work done by the Committee be sent out at least 10 days prior to next meeting, and all comments, edits, changes be sent back to LB 7 days before next meeting. LB will consolidate comments/edit documents and send back out 2 days prior to the next meeting. LB will identify any unresolved/conflicting items for attention to TB, so that they can be addressed at the meeting.

3. Leif Richardson, gave an overview of the work he and some of the committee members had done regarding the first charge of the legislation. His overview highlighted the status of native pollinators (bees, butterflies/moths and flies) and possible reasons for decline. MP, RC, LR & Dave Tremblay (state apiarist) have worked on some initial recommendations for the Committee.
4. Samantha Alger & Alex Burnham presented pathogen and mite data (and interactions) from bees collected in Vermont during 2015 as part of the National Honey Bee Survey. They highlighted potential impacts of migratory vs. stationary hives in Vermont. They also discussed some of their own UVM research looking at potential pest and pathogen interactions between native and managed honey bees in Vermont.

Discussion after presentation: JH asked about impact of purchased and imported bees (bee boxes) and their effect on native bees. Ms. Alger responded that she believed they could have a negative impact as they can often have many diseases and pests that can spill over into the native bees. She noted that there are only 2 sources for these bee boxes. One of the sources incorporates management practices to reduce disease pressures (*e.g.*, gamma irradiates pollen)—when she gets bees from this facility, the diseases are noticeably lower. These types of bee boxes are believed to be used by hothouse tomato and berry growers in Vermont. Secretary Ross, commented on the amount of data gaps identified for

pollinators in Vermont. He asked when the collection of meaningful data about pollinators, both native and managed, began. Committee members indicated that there are significant data gaps, but that Vermont is unique in having some data on native pollinators. Archived insect collections at UVM exist, but are not specific to pollinators. David Tremblay reported that hive data reported by previous state apiarist is thought to be biased high. However, current hive data is likely biased low due to incomplete registration of the hives. Baseline data collection for pollinators began mostly in the 2000s in the state. A possible recommendation from Committee will be to address these data gaps.

Review/evaluation of MP/RC/LR/DT recommendations and documents by 10/26/2016. Submit comments to LB.

5. Discussion/ review of remaining charges:

Discussion on Vermont's pesticide regulations & certification procedures. CG reviewed some of the Agency's current processes and regulations. The Vermont pesticide regulations were last updated in 1991 and likely to be updated soon, but two federal rules—which will affect Vermont's—are being revised by the USEPA (the Worker Protection Standard and the Applicator Certification & Training Rule). CG described the product registration process at the federal level. He noted the reevaluation of the 76 active ingredients identified as acutely toxic to pollinators is ongoing and that no additional conditional registrations for insecticides are allowed (lawsuits). Vermont also registers products and conducts a limited assessment at that time. Vermont does state-restrict (classify products as "restricted use", that the EPA has identified as general use) some products. Private applicators/commercial applicator certification process was described. Private applicators (farmers, greenhouses) take CORE exam for use of restricted use products (RUP). Commercial applicators take CORE exam and a specific category exam for the use of general and/or restricted use products on properties owned by others. Continuing education credits (CEUs) must be obtained in 5-year period. Commercial applicators renew and report use annually. Sales & storage of RUPs is reported by dealers, this is used as a surrogate for private applicator use.

EB noted that educational component for homeowners seemed very important. A discussion about homeowner pesticide product use ensued.

Questions and proposals about CEUs specific to pollinators were discussed. Is it possible to create a sub-category for pollinator specific education for applicators? It would require computer updates and a new tracking system, but could be done.

Are pollinators a specific consideration for restricting a product in Vermont? CG answered that it is not specifically identified. Environmental considerations and use patterns are a factor for classifying and registering products in Vermont.

MP asked about the concept of a "certificate of need" being required prior to purchasing an RUP. Conversation about IPM, known pest thresholds, and Ontario's strategy followed. Public commented on seed treatment as a lack of IPM. Availability of un-treated seeds was unknown, but likely limited in Vermont. CG pointed out that need/IPM for some industries was already regulated by economics or permits (e.g. golf courses)

Are toxicity studies only done on honey bees? CG answered that although most studies were on honey bees, there are a few bumble bee studies. MP noted that the Managed Pollinator Protection Plans from South Dakota and Georgia seemed more like “ways to keep your bees alive” and not a plan for pollinator protection. CG noted that the national focus on managed pollinators was partially related to the difficulty with identifying metrics for native pollinator health. RC & CG also pointed out that this may be related to the economic benefits associated with honey bees. LR noted that emphasizing the economic impacts of native pollinators to farmers is important.

CG noted that the 76 active ingredients under review by EPA as acutely toxic to bees contain 5 of the very few active ingredients available for organic growers and that neonicotinoids were registered to replace organophosphate insecticides.

A group was designated to review and make recommendations about pesticide applicator certification and regulations available for next meeting. Group to be led by **Eric Boire**, with **Cary Giguere**, **Terry Bradshaw**, **John Hayden** and **Jane Sorensen**.

JH asked about the process for regulating treated articles under new legislation. CG answered that Secretary of Agriculture would task the Vermont Pesticide Advisory Council to provide him/her with a recommendation regarding treated articles. Management could be enacted under the Secretary’s authority. There could be a separate recommendation from this Committee. There was discussion around what is a treated article and why it is exempt from FIFRA. JH noted he heard a lot of research on the impacts of treated seeds, but wanted to know if there were studies on the advantages to farmers. KB noted that there were definite benefits. She noted that in some places where treated seeds are banned, there are now pest/crop issues. MP added that he knew some overseas beekeepers that had issues related to the treated seed ban (resulting in increased foliar applications of pyrethroids). KB will present information at next meeting. TB will discuss neonicotinoids in apple industry at the next meeting. TB noted the need to solicit feedback from industry on pesticides, specifically neonicotinoids. He will do. The Committee also discussed looking into the science around the possible accumulation of neonicotinoids in the environment. Nat Shambaugh, a member of the public, introduced himself and offered to present on neonicotinoids. Kevin Komer, representing the Vermont Golf Course Superintendent’s Association introduced himself to the Committee and described the documents for the best management practices for neonicotinoids on golf courses. He also mentioned the using golf courses as a place to develop and plant beneficial habitat.

Habitat questions for AOT and NRCS arose. LB has been in touch with Toby Alexander (VT-NRCS) and he hopes to be able to attend the next meeting.

Secretary Ross tasked the Committee with a thorough evaluation of all of the factors affecting pollinator health. He stated that any request to the Secretary of Agriculture needed to be based on scientific evidence and considerate of the social, environmental, and economic implications for the state.
(Secretary Ross departed)

Discussion continued on Managed Pollinator Protection Plans and notifications of applicators to apiarists. Moving/covering hives is not always feasible, particularly for large apiaries. Registration of hives is very important. Early communication between applicators and beekeepers is also important.

It was noted that Connecticut and Maryland had classified neonicotinoid products as RUPs. Treated seeds and actions in Canada and Minnesota were generally discussed. Most Vermont farmers do not use type of seed planters that caused large bee kill in Canada (from seed dust off). Fluency agents added to reduce seed dust off reductions are now required in Canada. Label language around foliar applications of neonicotinoids when “not in bloom” was discussed. Pre-bloom applications may still have residual when bloom occurs. The EU allows for foliar “post-bloom” applications.

CC noted that the key component to all of these regulations and plans was education and that needed to be a key recommendation from the Committee. KB asked if the Committee would prioritize the recommendations based on criticality or highest impact? If Varroa mites & habitat are the largest problem in both managed and native bees, should recommendations related to those be ranked and prioritized in the Committee’s recommendations?

Oregon’s Task Force recommendation scheme was noted as a possible template. LR noted that he would like to see all recommendations in the final report, whether unanimous or not. This was generally agreed upon.

Public education and outreach were discussed. Wisconsin’s web site was noted as good. Industry specific BMPs may be necessary as each industry interacts with pollinators differently. Perhaps Committee could recommend a current web site with outreach materials that were agreed upon, so the state did not have to generate its own materials.

Funding Brainstorm ideas:

Tax return check-off boxes for pollinators? Part of non-game fund monies? License plates? Pesticide taxes? (all, acutely toxic to pollinators? Point-of-sale tax?) Approach federal delegation? Rusty patch bumble bee campaign? Local food movement/Made in VT branding? Kickstarter? USDA money? Ms. Alger noted that University of Minnesota funds its own bee lab through research/testing revenues and corporate funding/sponsorship of apiaries. Feel good corporate initiatives? Pesticide registration fees? Several committee members noted that some smaller pesticide companies will not register a product in Vermont due to the registration cost. Vermont’s pesticide product fees were just raised from \$125 to \$175 on 7/1/2016.

Others noted that it may be possible to partner for funding with existing sources and ongoing work: VTrans (mowing), US Forest Service (habitat), Northeast SARE grants etc. No additional comments from the public were received.

Motion to adjourn the meeting by Jane Sorensen, and seconded by Ross Conrad. Motion approved unanimously. **Meeting adjourned at 12:47 PM**

Submitted LAB 10/14/2016

Others attending

- Chuck Ross, Secretary of the Agency of Agriculture
- Jim Leland, Agency of Agriculture
- Alex Burnham, UVM
- Samantha Alger, UVM
- Jeff Comstock, Agency of Agriculture
- Margaret Laggis, CropLife America
- Robert Koethe, EPA R1
- David Tremblay, Agency of Agriculture
- Craig Di Giammarino, VTrans

DRAFT MINUTES

- Jarod Wilcox, Green Mountain Power
- Nat Shambaugh, public

- Kevin Komer, VT Golf Course
Superintendent's Ass'n