



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

LEGISLATIVE COMMENT

DATE: 2/22/2017 BILL NO.: HB 830

SUBJECT: POLLINATOR HABITAT PLANS – PLAN CONTENTS – REQUIREMENTS AND PROHIBITIONS

COMMITTEE: ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION

MDA POSITION: WRITTEN- FOR INFORMATION

EXPLANATION: In order to develop a State Pollinator Protection Plan the Maryland Department of Agriculture's Pesticide Regulation Section planned and held a Pollinator Stakeholders meeting at the University of Maryland. Attendees included beekeepers, growers, pesticide applicators, Maryland County Extension Agents. In addition, the states of Delaware, Pennsylvania and Virginia sent one individual each, to the meeting as Maryland was the first state to hold a Pollinator Stakeholder's meeting in the mid Atlantic region. The meeting included breakout sessions to discuss various issues related to pollinator health and protection. Each breakout group included beekeepers, growers, pesticide applicators and a facilitator.

COMMENT: MDA is strongly committed to honeybee health and Maryland's beekeeping industry. The Maryland Department of Agriculture has met with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the Maryland Environmental Service and, the State Highway Administration, to discuss their establishment of their pollinator habitat plan that includes best management practices for the maintenance, creation, enhancement, and restoration of pollinator habitats. These discussions are in the early phases and will be completed by July 1, 2018.

Many positive things are happening in support of honeybees in Maryland and at the national level:

- On January 20, 2016, MDA partnered with The University of to hold a Maryland Managed Pollinator Protection Plan (MP3) Summit. There were 73 participants representing many stakeholders involved with pollinator health in Maryland. Background information and facilitated discussions centered around three main categories: 1. Crop and vegetation pest control, 2. Forage and nutrition, and 3. Pollinator pests, disease, and genetics. Electronic polling at the end of the summit allowed for participants to identify the main concerns for MD pollinator health and the issues to be addressed in the MP3. The final report on all stakeholder input to draft a plan that protects pollinators and allows stakeholders to operate successfully is available on MDA's website.

- The EPA has been working aggressively to protect honeybees and other pollinators from pesticide exposure. EPA is currently reviewing all registered neonicotinoid products on a schedule that is expected to be completed in 2018. EPA released a preliminary pollinator risk assessment for imidacloprid on January 6, 2015 that is currently under review in the Federal Register. Clothianidin, thiamethoxam, dintefuran and acetamiprid are still under review. Thiacloprid was voluntarily cancelled by the registrant.

MDA believes that these processes need to be completed before any regulatory burdens are added that will detract from existing important programs that protect Maryland citizens and the environment from pesticide misuse.

There is also a general health concern to restricting pesticides that may be used on public lands to protect the general public from possible Zika and West Nile Virus outbreaks, caused by mosquitoes. State agencies need to have the efficient tools in the toolbox to protect the general public from these threats.

Other measures, including the treatment of invasive plants will be hindered if this bill were to pass, which will cause more hardship for native plants and ecosystems.

Invasive plants threaten native plant health and biodiversity in both agricultural and natural systems in Maryland. Many of these problematic plants are imported, bred, distributed and promoted for sale in the landscape and nursery industries. Maryland's Invasive Plant Advisory Committee (IPAC) was established by legislative mandate in October 2011. The IPAC's primary responsibility is to advise the Secretary of Agriculture on regulating the sale of invasive plants, and preventing them from entering Maryland or from spreading further in the state. Using a scientific weed risk assessment protocol, IPAC will classify invasive plants as Tier 1 or Tier 2 and recommend regulations to reduce the risk of invasive plants in Maryland

MDA enforces the federal registration of pesticide products at the state level. It is our position that EPA has always taken the lead on pesticide registration and labeling issues. They can and have canceled or changed pesticide product registrations and product labeling to protect the environment, human health, wildlife, and pollinators. EPA has the resources, expertise and reach to evaluate the vast volume of data and information available worldwide to assess pesticide risk. MDA also feels that these restrictions would create confusion in the distribution chain and market place. **In our experience, complicating the regulatory environment compromises compliance by even those who want to do the right thing.**