

Pollinator Working Group Meeting

Thursday September 22, 2016

Location: NRCS, Conference Room

60 Quaker Lane,
Warwick, RI 02886

Meeting Minutes

Working Group Members in attendance: Ken Ayars, Meg Kerr, Joel Tirrell, Shannon Brawley, David Brunetti, Lyn Spinella, Ken Payne, David Gregg, Lisa Tewksbury, Rafael Nightingale, Don Joslin, Robert Mann

Working Group members absent: Gary Casabona

Guests: Joe Masino, Keith Salisbury

Ken Ayars brought the meeting to order at 4:15 PM.

Attendees introduced themselves and gave a brief reason why they are willing to serve. All stated that the issue of pollinator health is of great concern and interest to them and the industry or sector they represent and that they are excited to have the opportunity to research the issue in Rhode Island and develop shared recommendations.

Quorum: Ken Payne made a motion that a quorum be defined as the majority of the sitting members. Lyn Spinella seconded and all approved.

Meeting dates and time: The group agreed by consensus that the proposed dates and times are acceptable. If a large crowd is expected, the group agreed that meeting at URI or RI DEM would be an acceptable second choice.

Operational guidelines:

- Members are encouraged to use their notebook to record thoughts and recommendations to share with the group.
- Speakers will be asked to provide a written copy of their remarks or slides so that their remarks and presentations are a matter of record – preferably ahead of time so that the working group can be prepared with questions a head of time and could offer other relevant resources for the groups archive.

Review of outline: Meg and Shannon briefly reviewed the outline that has been shared with the committee. Ken Ayars opened the discussion.

Pollinator definition needed. We need to start with definitions including what this group will mean when it uses the word, “pollinator”. For this report will the pollinator definition focus on commercial productivity and the environment? There is a difference between wild pollinators and domesticated bees, native and non-native. Will monarchs be included in our definition? Are there other words that might need defining (i.e. health, habitat, etc.)?

Baseline data. Do we have good data that describes the current condition of pollinators? How will we measure the impact of the recommendations that we make? Is Colony Collapse Disorder a real problem in RI, or is it a problem in other places and we are concerned about it here? Can we distinguish between acute and chronic impacts of pesticides on pollinators?

Topics to consider including:

- Plants that are beneficial to pollinators
- Bee symptoms can be confusing – and do not always lead to the same cause
- Commercial vs. Residential application of pesticides is a real issue. We recognize that homeowner education is a very difficult task.

November 3 meeting – the group agreed that the outline had too many topics for this date. Meg and Shannon are asked to think about this and adjust the outline.

Thoughts and concerns about the work ahead:

- Our task is challenging. We are looking for the balance between pesticide use – critical to the agricultural community - and pollinator health.
- RI Natural History Survey has a wealth of natural history data and is excited to see the opportunity for using it for policy development.
- Education is key. Homeowners and industry need training and re-training.
- Nancy Ostiguy (Penn State) has looked at the synergies between separate pesticide applications (homeowner, arborist, farmer, etc). Recommend her presentation for the group.
- DEM is concerned about future pressure for state pesticide application to respond to the gypsy moth infestation.
- Perhaps we should have signage in stores that sell pesticides to residential customers alerting them to bee-friendly products.
- What types of plants and crops serve pollinators best? (public comment and question)
- DEM would like more information that will provide further education and a scientific balance to inform decision making in the way pesticides (Neonics) are regulated in the state.
- The need to smash silos of thinking especially concerning modes of action and the use of chemicals - combination of use and not knowing what the other individuals are doing. What are the methods of application? Are there alternatives to Neonics and are they better or worse in impact? (public comment and questions)
- Need a better understanding of how we might “police” the homeowner and/or others.
- There is a sense of obligation to educate the public with a common messaging - what will this look like?
- The need to trust different perspectives so that we advance good public policy and education.
- The movie Vanishing of the Bees, a 2009 documentary, was mentioned as a good overview of some of the issues facing Bees. A link to the trailer:
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=Ze9qXHQ65O4>

After public comment was heard **Ken Ayars adjourned the meeting at 5:25 p.m.**