



THE XERCES SOCIETY FOR INVERTEBRATE CONSERVATION

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Senate Pollinator Habitat Protection Act of 2007

Widespread declines in honey bee colonies from Colony Collapse Disorder

Native bees can provide a safety net to farmers

Pollinator Habitat Protection Act of 2007 can help!

May 24, 2007, Senator Max Baucus (D-MT) and Senator Saxby Chambliss (R-GA) along with 28 other co-sponsors introduced the Pollinator Habitat Protection Act into the Senate today. This bill allows existing conservation programs to provide enhanced habitat for pollinators.

The European honey bee is -- and will continue to be -- the most important single crop pollinator in the United States. However, with the decline in the number of managed honey bee colonies from diseases, parasitic mites, and Africanized bees - as well as from Colony Collapse Disorder - it is important to increase the use of native bees in our agricultural system as well. Providing habitat for these pollinators is vital to this effort.

The Pollinator Habitat Protection Act of 2007 is aimed at improving habitat and food sources for pollinators. This bill utilizes existing Farm Bill conservation programs to strengthen both native and managed pollinator habitat. It does not cost additional money, or create a new program. It simply requires existing conservation programs to acknowledge pollinator habitat as a conservation resource and rewards producers whose conservation practices are beneficial for pollinators.

Specifically, the Pollinator Habitat Protection Act adds pollinators as a conservation target to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Conservation Security Program, and the Conservation Reserve Program.

“This bill can help to improve crop security and the sustainability of agriculture, by helping farmers in the United States diversity their pollinator portfolio” said Scott Hoffman Black, executive director of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. “The Pollinator Habitat Protection Act of 2007 will provide incentives to encourage farmers to improve habitat for both native and managed pollinators.”

Hundreds of species of native bees are available for crop pollination. Research from across the country demonstrates that a wide range of native bees help with crop pollination, in some cases providing all of the pollination required. These free, unmanaged bees provide a valuable service, estimated recently by scientists from the Xerces Society and Cornell University to be worth \$3 billion annually in the U.S.

"Almost all of our pollination eggs are in the honey bee basket," says Mace Vaughan, conservation director of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. "The Pollinator Protection Act of 2007 will put habitat on the ground for bumble bees, sweat bees, mason bees, squash bees, sunflower bees, miner bees, and also support honey bees. This bill strengthens and adds pollinator baskets for agriculture."

Pollinator Habitat Protection Act of 2007

Conserving America's pollinators will require economic incentives for private landowners. On October 18, 2006, the National Academy of Sciences released the report [Status of Pollinators in North America](#), which called attention to the decline of pollinators. Prepared by a National Research Council (NRC) committee, the report made several recommendations including urging the federal government to fund pollinator conservation through Farm Bill conservation and research programs.

The bill would create incentives for farmers to protect, restore and enhance pollinator habitat on and around farms. Pollinator Habitat Protection Act of 2007 would encourage state-level Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices to promote scientifically tested and approved pollinator-friendly practices for farmers participating in Farm Bill conservation programs.

Fully integrating native pollinators into Farm Bill programs can have a wide impact. For example, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) allocated over \$1 billion in financial and technical assistance to farmers in 2006, and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) retired over 36 million acres of farmland, 4.5 million of which was specifically for wildlife habitat that could be tailored to provide the greatest benefit for pollinators.

Importance of Protecting Pollinators

Pollinators are essential to our environment. The ecological service they provide is important for the reproduction of nearly 75 percent of the world's flowering plants. This includes more than two-thirds of the world's crop species, and one in three mouthfuls of the food that we eat. The United States alone grows more than one hundred crops that either require or benefit from pollinators.

Beyond agriculture, native pollinators are keystone species in most terrestrial ecosystems. Fruits and seeds derived from insect pollination are a major part of the diet of approximately 25 percent of birds, and of mammals ranging from deer mice to grizzly bears.

Why are native bees so helpful? Collectively, native bees are more versatile than honey bees. Some species, such as mason bees, are active when conditions are too cold or wet for honey bees. Many species also are simply more efficient at moving pollen between flowers. Bumble

bees and several other native species can buzz pollinate flowers - vibrating the flower to release pollen from deep inside the pollen-bearing anthers - which honey bees cannot do. Crops such as tomatoes, cranberries, and blueberries produce larger, more abundant fruit when buzz pollinated.

The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation is an international non-profit organization that protects the diversity of life through the conservation of invertebrates. The Society advocates for invertebrates and their habitats by working with scientists, land managers, educators, and citizens on conservation and education projects. Its core programs focus on endangered species, native pollinators, and watershed health.

For more information on pollinator conservation go to: www.xerces.org

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