



United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Research, Education, and Economics (REE)

National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics (NAREEE) Advisory Board

Pollinator Subcommittee Meeting – Monday, February 24, 2025

Pollinator Subcommittee (PS) Members Present: Dr. Christina Grozinger (Chair), Ms. Kelly Bills, Mr. Darren Cox, Ms. Danielle Downey, Ms. Melanie Kirby, Dr. Ramesh Sagili, Dr. Daniel Schmehl and Dr. Hollis Woodard - 8

Members Absent: Dr. Margarita López-Uribe - 1

Ex-Officio Present: Ms. Elizabeth Hill, USDA Honey Bee and Pollinator Research Coordinator, Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS), USDA – 1

NAREEE Board Staff Present: Michele Simmons, Program Support Specialist

Guest: - Diana Cox-Foster, Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Seth Cross, ARS, Jay Evans, ARS, Kevin Hackett, ARS, and Arathi Seshadri, ARS

I. Welcome, Roll Call, Quorum Check, and Minutes

Ms. Simmons took roll call and noted that the quorum was met. She asked if there were any revisions or edits to the January minutes. There were none. Ms. Simmons asked for a motion and a second, which was received to approve the minutes. All were in favor, and no one opposed. She will have the web team post January's minutes and agenda on the PS website.

II. Report/Remarks from Dr. Christina Grozinger, Chair

Dr. Grozinger stated the PS needs to update the priorities and the goals for the pollinator health program. She is looking forward to hearing about the overview on the honeybee losses topic and how the PS can possibly make recommendations to support the researchers and beekeepers. Dr. Grozinger asked if there were any comments. There were none. She turned the honeybee losses topic over to the guest.

III. New Business

Major 2025 Honeybee Losses

Ms. Hill thanked the ARS group for joining the PS meeting. She stated that around mid-January 2025, beekeeper communities started getting reports of dramatic honeybee losses. Usually, the bloom from pollination starts the middle of February. In February, beekeepers were trying to fill shortages for almond pollination. The bees weren't flying like they normally do so the strength of the colonies started to dwindle. This might have an impact on the almond production this year.

Ms. Hill mentioned that beekeepers are trying to salvage what is left of their operations. Some are close to going out of business. The losses ranged from 750,000 to 1 million. The American Honey Producers sent a letter to the Secretary of USDA for awareness of this important issue and what the consequences could be. She has encouraged beekeepers to apply for 2025 assistance.

Ms. Hill asked if there were any questions.

A member asked if the bee loss issues is being covered by news agencies?

A member stated coverage is being picked up in some places, but it's not getting a lot of media attention.

A member stated that a lot of beekeepers are looking at very sick and weak bees. Few beekeepers are expecting double digit losses. We need to look at ways to help stabilize financial losses that the industry is taking.

A member had a question about monies that were for pesticides and how it's being arranged?

A member stated that a professor of pollinator health at Cornell University has some internal funding that is being used.

A survey was sent to beekeepers that had questions like what geographic region were your bees in during the summer? Where did they go to for winter? Were they in sheds or were they outdoors? ect... The survey closed February 10, 2025.

A member asked who is working on retrieving the data from the survey.

A member answered that mostly USDA-ARS folks are retrieving and analyzing the data.

The PS members continued discussing the different honeybee losses in different states, surveys that are being done, and recommendations that can be made.

A member asked what are we allowed to do as a subcommittee to help?

Ms. Hill stated that the PS can submit a letter with recommendations to USDA leadership.

Ms. Simmons informed the PS the steps of the clearance process that the letter would need to go through before submitting it to the USDA Secretary's office. She explained that the process could take over a month.

A member suggested that they meet soon to start drafting a letter of recommendations for the honeybee losses. It was agreed that a google draft document would be generated for the PS to start making suggestions and edits to. It was decided that the PS will meet on March 10, 2025, for further discussion.

Ms. Simmons noted that two of the agenda topics that weren't discussed due to the lack of time will most likely be discussed at the next monthly PS meeting. Those 2 topics were the NASS Annual Bee and Honey Survey Recommendations and the update of the State of the Science meeting.

Wrap-up/Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:31 p.m. ET.

The next meeting is Monday, March 24, 2025, ET.