



THE XERCES SOCIETY FOR INVERTEBRATE CONSERVATION



Protecting the Life that Sustains Us

Comments in Support of House Bills 3360 - 3362 and House Concurrent Resolution 9

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The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation (Xerces Society) is pleased to support House Bills 3360 – 3362 and House Concurrent Resolution 9. These bills are a step in the right direction to protect Oregon’s vitally important native and managed pollinators.

Along with managed European honey bees, Oregon is home to an estimated 800 species of native bees. Honey bees and native bees jointly provide Oregon agriculture an estimated \$600 million in pollination service annually. The value of honey bees is well documented. Native bees however, often play an overlooked role in our agricultural systems. But, research has begun to document their importance. For example, researchers found that when native bees were present, the production of Sungold cherry tomatoes almost tripled (Greenleaf and Kremen 2006). Another study demonstrated that wild bees trip over 80% of alfalfa flowers visited; while the managed leafcutter and honey bees trip only 25% (Brunet and Stewart 2010).

Unfortunately, many of Oregon’s native bumble bee species are imperiled including *Bombus fervidus*, *Bombus caliginosus*, *Bombus suckleyi*, *Bombus morrisoni*, *Bombus occidentalis* and *Bombus franklini*. Managed honey bees also suffer significant losses each year. These pollinator declines create challenges for the many crops that depend upon insect pollination.

Prompted by both the multiple bee kills in Oregon, and broader pollinator concerns, the Oregon Task Force on Pollinator Health was formed. I served as a member of the task force. During the summer of 2014, the task force took the time to better understand the risks to pollinators, as well as discuss possible solutions. The task force recognized key risk factors including lack of forage and habitat, pesticide exposures, disease and parasites. In October 2014, the task force compiled a list of recommendations to help address these risk factors. While the task force did not come to agreement on all issues, HB 3360 - 62 and HCR 9 fulfill the task force’s priority unanimous recommendations.

Jointly, these bills begin to respond to the multiple risk factors pollinators face. For example, the bee health diagnostic facility could help identify and respond to disease and parasite issues, the outreach and education effort could help better inform the general public and licensed applicators of how to protect pollinators from pesticides, and best management practices can help raise awareness about a variety of pollinator-friendly actions.

For these reasons, the Xerces Society supports these bills. Thank you.

References

Greenleaf, S. S., and C. Kremen. 2006. Wild bee species increase tomato production and respond differently to surrounding land use in Northern California. *Biological Conservation* 133:81-87.

Brunet, J., C.M. Stewart. 2010. Impact of Bee Species and Plant Density on Alfalfa Pollination and Potential for Gene Flow. *Psyche*, vol. 2010, Article ID 201858. doi:10.1155/2010/201858.