



OREGON
ASSOCIATION OF
NURSERIES

**Testimony before the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
House Bill 3360, 3361 and 3362 relating to recommended policies on pollinator health**

By Jeff Stone, Executive Director, Oregon Association of Nurseries

April 7, 2015

Chairman Witt, Vice-Chairs McLain and Krieger, members of the committee, my name is Jeff Stone and I serve as the Executive Director of the Oregon Association of Nurseries. We support House Bills 3360, 3361 and 3362 as reasoned policies to protect pollinator health. This testimony supplements the materials I submitted to the committee administrator on Monday, March 23, 2015 relating to the many facets of pollinator health is requested to be part of the official record.

The Economic Footprint of the Nursery and Greenhouse Industry

The nursery and greenhouse industry is the state's largest agricultural sector, and is finally seeing a resurgence following years of significant economic declines during and after the great recession. Oregon's nursery industry ranks third in the nation, with over \$766 million in sales annually to customers in Oregon, the rest of the United States, and abroad. In fact, nearly 75% of the nursery stock grown in our state leaves our borders – with over half reaching markets east of the Mississippi River. We send ecologically friendly green products out of the state, and bring traded sector dollars back to Oregon.

Nursery association members represent wholesale plant growers, Christmas tree growers, retailers, and greenhouse operators. Our members are located throughout the state, with our largest nursery growing operations found in Clackamas, Marion, Washington, Yamhill and Multnomah Counties.

Let the Task Force on Pollinator Health do its work

While the furor over the death of bees received national notoriety, the discussion in Oregon was engaged by beekeepers, environmental groups and farm organizations. In 2014, Oregon House Bill 4139 could have taken a negative approach and pitting interest group against interest group - but that did not happen. Instead, stakeholders listened to one another and determined that a science-based approach to pollinator health would lead to a better solution.

The "Report to the Oregon Legislative Assembly" by the Task Force on Pollinator Health was released in November 2014. Four main consensus items emerged that received the

support of stakeholders. This year, the OAN and others advocated for the creation of three bills to enact the recommendations of the task force. They are below:

- I. Oregon should develop a strong, effective outreach and education strategy on pollinator health, including best management practices. **(House Bill 3362)**
- II. Oregon should fully fund a state-of-the-art bee health diagnostic facility at Oregon State University. **(House Bill 3360)**
- III. An integrated pollinator health research plan should be developed and funded to improve understanding of the many issues affecting pollinator health. **(House Bill 3361)**
- IV. A sustainable revenue stream to fund the proposed outreach, education and research programs is needed.

Over the next two years, stakeholders will roll up their sleeves and work with our land grant university (Oregon State University), legislators, and state agencies to determine the most appropriate path forward. It is critical we work with interested parties to examine how to study this issue further and create a communication effort for the general public and industry. We all benefit when we move in a reasoned manner to evaluate trends in pollinator health, including the use of best management practices.

The nursery industry needs pollinators and tools to battle pest and disease

As a proud part of U.S. agriculture, we certainly understand the importance of pollinators to the agricultural industry and our natural environment. Much of the debate this year has been over concerns around pesticide use and potential effects on bees are very important to all pesticide users, but especially those involved in agriculture. Oregon farmers depend on bees to pollinate many of their crops. They also depend on pesticides as tools to control destructive pests. Similarly, commercial beekeepers rely on healthy crops to optimize their pollination services. This means that Oregon growers and beekeepers have a lot at stake in this conversation. Both of us want to make sure that protecting bee health, and retaining pesticides as an effective tool, are not mutually exclusive.

Oregon can serve as a model to pass proactive and positive legislation

The consensus approach through the Task Force on Pollinator Health has produced three good bills, worthy of your consideration and support. The OAN continues to work with state and national stakeholders to ensure that science and fiscal resources are allocated to protect pollinators. The association has supported local research funding for Oregon State University through the Specialty Crop Block Grant program as well as the \$69 million in proposed pollinator health funding within the U.S. Department of Agriculture budget. Currently the Environmental Protection Agency is reviewing the role of pesticides and certain classes of neonicotinoids. The agency should be allowed to do its work.

The OAN urges the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources to examine all the facts, support legislation that solves problems for both pollinators and agriculture, and listen to the Task Force on Pollinator Health. Please support HB 3360, 3361, and 3362 and make a positive step to protect pollinators in Oregon.