

## Save Oregon's Pollinators Act addresses bee decline:

*First public hearing scheduled for Tuesday, February 11 in Salem*

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**Salem, Ore.** In response to four separate bee die-offs last summer that killed approximately 55,000 bumble bees, new legislation seeks solutions protect pollinators from insecticides. Save Oregon's Pollinators Act (House Bill 4139) will get its first hearing with the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee in Salem on Tuesday February 11<sup>th</sup>.

Introduced by Rep. Jeff Reardon (D-Happy Valley), the bill will be amended to direct Oregon State University and the Oregon Department of Agriculture to increase education for licensed pesticide applicators about pollinator protection.

The amended bill also creates a task force charged with bringing to the 2015 session new legislation to address the threat that pesticides pose to pollinator health. Emphasis is on four particularly harmful pesticides in the neonicotinoid class: clothianidin, dinotefuran, imidacloprid and thiamethoxam.

The legislation was developed to address the large body of research linking the use of neonicotinoids to recent declines of honey bees and native pollinators, such as bumble bees. These pesticides are highly toxic to bees and remain in the environment for months or even years.

While conservation and environmental health organizations were hoping to see a stronger bill passed during the 2014 session in order to avoid another year of pollinator losses, they are pleased this effort is moving forward. The bill is an opportunity to build a solid plan to protect the more than 800 native bee species of Oregon that along with European honey bees provide an estimated \$600 million value of crop production to the state.

"Representative Reardon's Save Oregon's Pollinators Act has our support, however, we believe this bill does not go far enough to protect bees and other beneficial insects from these toxic insecticides," said Scott Hoffman Black, Executive director of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. "Our goal will be to work with the task force to come up with meaningful legislation that will really help address this important issue."

This bill was worked on by a diverse group of stakeholders, including Beyond Toxics, Oregon Association of Nurseries, the Oregon League of Conservation Voters, Oregonians for Food and Shelter, and the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation.

Lisa Arkin, Director of Beyond Toxics, points out how this bill responds to the concerns of many Oregonians: "Oregonians want to protect bees. This bill starts us off in the right direction, and we will be seeking permanent safeguards for pollinators as well as protection for Oregon's food production, so much of which is dependent upon bees."

The House Agriculture and Natural Resources committee hearing on HB4139 will allow Oregon legislators a chance to hear expert testimony and will be held in Hearing Room D in the State Capitol in Salem on Tuesday, February 11th beginning at 8:00 a.m. Members of the public are invited to attend.

The group came together at Representative Reardon's urging to find short term protections to stop further harm to pollinators while the federal government undergoes a lengthy registration review of neonicotinoid pesticides to be completed by 2019.

For more background on the bill and the issues: <http://www.SaveOregonBees.org/>

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#### **For More Information**

<http://www.SaveOregonBees.org/>

Download a copy of *Are Neonicotinoids Killing Bees? A Review of Research into the Effects of Neonicotinoid Insecticides on Bees, with Recommendations for Action* at

<http://www.xerces.org/neonicotinoids-and-bees/>

Read about the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's review of neonicotinoids at

<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/ecosystem/pollinator/risk-mgmt.html>

#### **Beyond Toxics**

Beyond Toxics, an Oregon non-profit, has worked to guarantee environmental protections and health for all communities and residents since 2000. We expose root causes of toxic pollution, health inequities and help communities find effective, lasting solutions. More information at [www.BeyondToxics.org](http://www.BeyondToxics.org).

#### **Oregon League of Conservation Voters**

The Oregon League of Conservation Voters is a non-partisan organization with a simple mission: To pass laws that protect Oregon's environmental legacy, elect pro-environment candidates to office, and hold all of our elected officials accountable. For more information, visit [olcv.org](http://olcv.org).

#### **The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation - *Protecting the Life that Sustains Us***

The Xerces Society is a Portland, Ore.-based nonprofit organization that protects wildlife through the conservation of invertebrates and their habitat. Since 1971, the Society has been at the forefront of invertebrate protection, harnessing the knowledge of scientists and the enthusiasm of citizens to implement conservation programs worldwide. To learn more about our work, please visit

[www.xerces.org](http://www.xerces.org).