

Governor Signs “Save Oregon’s Pollinators” Act

Legislation is first of its kind in the United States

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SALEM, Ore. — Today Governor Kitzhaber signed into law the “Save Oregon’s Pollinators Act” (HB4139-A). This is the nation’s first statewide legislation passed with the intent to better protect pollinators from the highly toxic class of pesticides called neonicotinoid. The compromise bill passed both the House and Senate with overwhelming bipartisan support.

Lisa Arkin, Director of Beyond Toxics, points out this bill responds to the concerns of many Oregonians: “Oregonians want to protect bees. The passage of this bill starts us off in the right direction. We will be seeking permanent safeguards for pollinators as well as protection crops that are dependent on pollination. Without bees, Oregon food production industries would lose hundreds of millions of dollars.”

The bill requires all pesticide applicators to receive training on ways to protect pollinators from pesticide exposure. The pollinator protection information will also be included in applicator licensing exams.

The bill also establishes a task force required to study additional bee-protection measures and to work towards offering the 2015 legislature a proposal to protect Oregon’s vitally important pollinators. The task force’s directive includes evaluating the effectiveness of applicator licensing and other legal requirements that will comprehensively protect bees. No other state legislature has yet addressed the issue of bee decline and its connection to the use of neonicotinoids.

“The science is clear. The risk these chemicals pose to pollinators warrants greater protections,” said Scott Hoffman Black, Executive Director of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. “Our goal is to work with the task force to come up with meaningful legislation that will really help address this important issue.”

In response to four separate bee die-offs in the Portland area last summer that killed approximately 55,000 bumble bees, this new legislation provides a partial solution to help protect pollinators from dangerous pesticides.

Introduced by Rep. Jeff Reardon (D-Happy Valley), the original bill would have listed neonicotinoids as a restricted class of pesticides. Co-sponsors include Representatives Alissa Keny-Guyer and Brent Barton, and Senator Betsy Johnson.

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 years.

This bill was developed 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.

The stakeholders 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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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. 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. 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. xerces.org.