



United States Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service



February 20, 2015

TO: Rebecca Riley, Natural Resources Defense Council,
Sarina Jepsen, The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, and
Jason Rylander, Defenders of Wildlife,

Thank you for your comments on the new pollinator surveys being planned by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). Pollinators are very important and NASS is working with other USDA agencies on this task. In the area of livestock, NASS works primarily with those commodities that are on the farm or are managed livestock commodities. NASS has had a honey bee program for many years. The new surveys would expand that program into collecting data on colony loss. Bumble bees are not one of the commodities that NASS considers to be farm located managed livestock. Whereas, we maintain a list of operators who have honey bees NASS does not maintain a list of individuals who have bumble bees.

Probably the most important item to mention is that NASS is working with a multitude of agencies and the collection of data for honey bees has been assigned to NASS because of the previous work we have done in this same area. Also, we would not want to duplicate the government's efforts in the collection of this data so NASS will not be collecting any information on bumble bees. Other agencies will be taking up the task of collecting information on pollinators other than honey bees.

At this time I am not at liberty to comment on the USDA plan as it has not been released to the public. However, rest assured that USDA is working on this important topic and that further information will be available soon.

Once the questionnaires are finalized, they will be posted in the RegInfo system along with the supporting statements. The public will be given an additional 30 days to comment on the entire data collection package.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "R. Renee Picanso".

R. Renee Picanso,
Associate Administrator
U.S. Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service