

Background: In late August, the members of the Governor's Committee on Pollinator Protection were asked to respond to a poll on a series of proposals on the areas of reducing pesticides and increasing habitat to provide greater pollinator protection. The top "yes" vote getters were discussed, and a Pollinator Habitat Subcommittee was formed to review these topic areas and develop them into draft goals for further review/refinement.

This subcommittee includes: Dan Schutte, Dave Flakne, Jim Calkins, Sarah Foltz Jordan, Dan MacSwain.

During our 9/21 Subcommittee Meeting, we refined/condensed the list of high-ranking goals to the following 4 Goals. Bullets were added by specific subcommittee members tasked with addressing specific goals.

During our 10/26 Full Committee Meeting, we presented these 4 Goals and received support from the committee to continue developing/refining these ideas.

11/13 Meeting with Agencies: Prioritize these goals; fill in any gaps; determine action plans and partnerships for these goals.

- **Improved Education Standards For MN Schools**

- Educational tool kits distributed to educators to show how pollinator habitat could be incorporated into school landscapes and incorporated into curriculum (BWSR may have interest/capacity to work on this tool kit; showcasing existing Pollinator Tool Box, and revamping for educators, with additional partners involved)
- Requirement for any new schools to have a certain % of pollinator landscaping
- Science standards benchmarks including examples that utilize pollinator habitat
- Field trip incentive/funding for schools to look at these sites and be more engaged. SWCD's & watershed districts might be good partners for this. May be more highlighting of projects via BWSR PR materials, these could be featured and then visited.
- Libraries are administered by MDE; they can promote materials/resources through statewide library networks
- Pro-actively seek out conference/workshops/meetings where educational and standards-based that involve pollinators and their habitat be promoted
- The Minnesota Agricultural Education Leadership Council (MAELC; <http://mn.gov/maelc/about.html>) is developing recommendations for legislation to improve MN Ag education standards (K-12 and collegiate) this March. Coordinate with this group to include pollinator standards?

- **Habitat Improvements in Roadside and Utility Corridors**

- Funding for MnDOT to hire a Vegetation Management Outreach/Educator and Haying specialist
- Encourage BWSR to develop seed mixes that increase nectar resources in hayed areas (including native and non-native legumes). BWSR currently has list of 40 pilot seed mixes. Room to develop additional mixes focused on pollinators, and funding probably not needed for this. Partner with MnDOT (Ken Graeve). Also: there is a need for more testing of existing BWSR pollinator plot mixes- BWSR needs to set up system for tracking results of seed mix testing.
- Provide funding for BWSR to develop statewide corridor prioritization tool
- Ask for LCCMR/LSOHC funds to install tallgrass prairie/shrubs to provide pollinator habitat, reduce snow drift and provide long term savings. Ensure plantings are not installed near areas prone to pesticide drift, and instead placed in protected areas. Focus would be to combine plantings along roadways for pollinators and snowdrift.
- MN DNR Roadsides for Wildlife Program- reinvigorate this program with new funding/staffing. If investment happens, then there needs to be regulation of haying/mowing, coupled with enforcement/consequence (both DNR and DOT currently have no budget / capability for enforcement, current statute doesn't provide this).

- **Habitat improvements on Agricultural and other Rural Lands**

- Diversify non-crop & marginal croplands in MN by planting native wildflowers, flowering hedgerows, and other pollinator habitat. *Any new program should complement and not compete with existing state and NRCS programs.* <http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/practices/pollinator/pollinator-tool1.pdf>
NRCS take home: additional funding increase the number of technical pollinator habitat experts (both within and as partners to agencies) to support capacity for implementing existing program. BWSR has \$ to do diverse habitat plantings on existing RIM lands, but there would be more happening if there was more expertise out there on pollinator habitat. So much BWSR funding focused on clean water. Need more resources for: landowners without cropping history, and specific acreage without cropping history. Residential sites, urban sites, non-ag land on farms. Mapping could help identify priority spots.
- Add language to new and existing habitat program requirements to ensure that any pollinator habitat installed with state dollars (or channelled through state agencies) be protected from pesticide drift (e.g., using existing definitions/requirements established by MN CSP supplement). Work with BWSR to create fact sheet with talking points about habitat placement recommendations and case studies of how farmers are approaching this issue in agricultural landscapes. BWSR will revisit current standards for RIM. If talking about designing sites to minimize drift, there needs to be more training in this regard. Very few conservation staff know about the agronomy tech note on pesticides. Need to couple new guidance with technical assistance and outreach about the new guidance.
- Increase attention to the opportunity of habitat under solar arrays. Committee could issue a statement that “Solar habitat opportunities with exemplary pollinator habitat is a productive use of high quality farmland” (score of 85 or greater on BWSR solar assessment form). Add budget to BWSR to certify and assess solar farms for ability to support pollinators (currently assessment form exists but BWSR has limited capacity to conduct assessments). Public comment: When the solar garden habitat is discussed, you may want to look through this doc from the DNR. Unfortunately, they only mention pollinators in the 'vegetation management' section near the end. I think they should be talked about throughout the doc, as you may agree. Maybe you can refer to this, or connect both BWSR and DNR efforts together to push the solar garden habitat concept? http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/publications/ewr/commercial_solar_siting_guidance.pdf
- Diversify cropland and marginal cropland in MN by encouraging/incentivizing alternative cropping systems (with emphasis on pollinator attractive crops/cover crops, and/or crops that have minimal dependence on pollinator-toxic pesticides (perennial crops, some fruit/veg crops, hay, biofuels, etc). MDA: set goals for acres planted to cover crops and alternative flowering crops, and develop programs (outreach material, technical assistance, funding pools) to achieve these goals. Cover crop goals should focus on *flowering* cover crop species (e.g., red clover, alfalfa, buckwheat) integrated into a cropping system in which systemic insecticides have not been in use for at least one growing season. Develop and showcase examples of cropping systems that work economically. Complete an Assessment of Needs: market development, infrastructure, research, transition year period incentives, etc. What is crop insurance doing to disincentivize “atypical” cropping systems like this?
- MDA: prioritize research addressing potential risk of flowering covers/crops integrated into neonic-treated cropping systems.
- Note: Include Shawn Schottler from St. Croix Lab in the conversation. He has LCCMR funding for diversified crop research, and our projects may both benefit from combining thoughts. Pollinator experts can provide pollinator-centric crops/systems, and Shawn knows market trends/challenges as well as the economics behind alternative cropping systems. (Dan S. will reach out to him)
- MNDNR wildlife food plots: About 15K acres. Currently monoculture cropping of corn/soy is commonplace. Rigorous checking or enforcement presents a challenge. Need for better education to cooperative farmers about the requirements and where to purchase untreated seed? DNR 3 years into the process of developing new policy on food plots. No monocultures and emphasis on multispecies covers? May need funding for seed, if plots do not pay for themselves (seed harvest could help with this)? Opportunity for farmers to

Habitat improvements in Urban/Suburban Lands

- Emphasis on conversion of turf to flowering habitat on acreage not currently eligible for existing state and federal programs.

- New program managed by state agency/s to allocate funding for habitat projects on lands currently not eligible for state / federal programs. This could include plantings in agricultural areas without crop history, and plantings on non-ag lands. Program could use clean water dollars to maximise pollinator benefit, or new program for turf conversion. Could ask for LCCMR funding with numerous partners. Could be both a general fund source; improve clean water projects; Would be hard for legislators to turn down, 300K every two years. Wide range of project opportunities: bee lawns, wildflower landscaping; native shrubs, rain gardens, etc.
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For each goal: More training provided to conservation practitioners with regard to habitat installation and management

- Many organizations and agencies are offering occasional habitat-related trainings (e.g., BWSR, DNR, NRCS, Xerces, Poll Friendly Alliance); we need to (1) increase the number and scope of trainings offered; (2) better coordinate efforts; and (3) improve our outreach about these events. Megan Lennon - BWSR is coordinating trainings at the local level for SWCDs, and getting job approval authority on certain practices, which could include pollinator habitat certification/assessment skills.