

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## SSB 5552

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### C 353 L 19

Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Concerning the protection of all pollinators, including honey bees.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks (originally sponsored by Senators Liias, Warnick, Van De Wege, Short, Rolfes, Schoesler, Wagoner, Honeyford, Hawkins and Hunt).

**Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks**  
**Senate Committee on Ways & Means**  
**House Committee on Rural Development, Agriculture, & Natural Resources**  
**House Committee on Appropriations**

**Background:** Each person owning one or more hives with bees, brokers renting hives, and apiarists residing in other states who operate hives in Washington must register annually with the Department of Agriculture (WSDA). In 2018 fees for owners ranged from \$5 for one to five colonies and up to \$300 for 1001 or more colonies. Fees for brokers ranged from \$100 for one to 500 colonies and up to \$300 for 1001 or more colonies. WSDA issues each registered apiarist or broker an apiarist identification number.

The 2013 Legislature directed WSDA to convene a work group to address challenges facing the honey bee industry and to develop a report outlining solutions that bolster the use of Washington honey bees to pollinate tree fruits, berries, and seeds. WSDA delivered the required report on December 12, 2014. In the report, bee forage and bee nutrition was identified as one of four main issues affecting honey bee health. The report concluded that access to diverse pollen and nectar sources, provided through access to diverse forage habitat, is essential for honey bees to properly meet their protein, carbohydrate, and other nutritional needs.

In 2015, the Legislature directed the Noxious Weed Control Board (Board) to conduct a pilot project evaluating the advantages of replacing pollen-rich noxious weeds with non-invasive forage plants that can produce similar levels of seasonally balanced pollen and nectar to support honey bee populations. The goal of the pilot project is to develop optional guidance and best practices for landowners and land managers. In developing the pilot project, the Board must seek to maximize the dual public benefits of reducing noxious weeds and supporting agricultural production through access to pollen-rich and nectar-rich forage for honey bees and other pollinators.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

As part of the mandate for state agencies to control noxious weeds on the land they manage, state agencies must, when conducting planned projects, give preference to replacing pollen-rich and nectar-rich noxious weeds with native pollinator-friendly forage plants when deemed appropriate by the agency and its targeted resource-management goals.

**Summary:** WSDA must establish a program to promote and protect pollinator habitat and the health and sustainability of pollinator species. The program must provide technical and financial assistance to state agencies, local governments, and private landowners to implement practices promoting habitat for managed pollinators, as well as beekeeper and grower best management practices. The program must be administered in coordination with the Apiary Program, the Honey Bee Commission, and programs administered by the conservation commission and conservation districts.

WSDA must develop educational materials regarding the best practices for avoiding adverse effects from pesticides on populations of bees and other pollinating insects. The educational materials must include, but not be limited to, measures that anyone applying pesticides can take to protect bees.

WSDA must establish a pollinator health task force including representatives from various state agencies, agricultural industries, Washington State University, pesticide distributors and applicators, conservation organizations, beekeeping organizations, a youth representative from an organization that encourages students in agricultural education, and two members of the public. Additionally, one or more representatives of Washington tribes must also be invited to participate on the task force. The task force must develop a state pollinator health strategy that includes:

- a research action plan to focus state efforts on understanding, preventing, and recovering from pollinator losses;
- a plan to expand and coordinate public education programs to help address the loss of pollinators;
- a plan to expand research on and education related to varroa mites and other pests and diseases that affect bees;
- recommendations for developing partnerships to encourage pollinator protection and increase habitat and forage for pollinators;
- specific targets and plans that state agencies should adopt to enhance pollinator habitat on their managed lands and facilities;
- recommendations for promoting seed banks and native plants beneficial for pollinators;
- recommendations for developing a plan to improve communication between beekeepers, landowners, and pesticide applicators; and
- recommendations for legislative, administrative, or budgetary actions necessary to implement the strategy.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) must consider, among other considerations, maintenance of pollinator habitat and habitat beneficial for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of pollinators, including honey bees, when fulfilling the obligations of managing trust lands. DNR must consider pollinator habitat when adopting a multiple use land resource allocation plan or updating its land use data bank. The Department of Fish and

Wildlife must implement practices necessary to maintain pollinator habitat on department-owned and managed agricultural and grazing lands where practicable.

When managing state park lands, land must be managed to preserve and maintain, among other considerations, habitat that will protect and promote habitat beneficial for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of pollinators, including honey bees. When planting shrubbery along the right-of-way of state highways or under the Adopt-a-Highway program, applicants should use native forage plants that are pollen-rich or nectar-rich and beneficial for all pollinators, including honey bees. When considering acquisition projects or riparian projects, the Recreation and Conservation Funding Board must consider certain criteria, including habitat benefits for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of all pollinators, including honey bees.

A city, town, code city, or county may authorize the use of vacant or blighted land for the purpose of community gardening by ordinance. The ordinance must require a portion of the community garden include habitat beneficial for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of pollinators, including honey bees. A city, town, or code city may adopt an ordinance establishing an urban agriculture zone within its city or town limits.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

Senate	48	0	
House	98	0	(House amended)
Senate	49	0	(Senate concurred)

**Effective:** July 28, 2019