



NORTH AMERICAN POLLINATOR PROTECTION CAMPAIGN (NAPPC)

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SCIENTIFIC TASK FORCE REVIEWS BEE IMPORTATION PRACTICES: CANADA, MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES IN SYNC PREVENTING FOREIGN INVADER FROM PUSHING OUT NATIVE POLLINATORS

**North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC) releases
white paper and recommendations on issues surrounding non-native bumble bee
importation for use by agricultural and environmental policymakers
in the United States, Canada, and Mexico**

A two year synthesis white paper of potential problems of importing non-native bumble bees to pollinate crops in greenhouses was released today by the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC). Representing the prestigious partnership of nearly 120 organizations involved in the Campaign, were authors Kimberly Winter, NAPPC; Laurie Adams, Coevolution Institute; Robbin Thorp, University of California, Davis; David Inouye, University of Maryland; Liz Day, NAPPC Task Force; John Ascher, American Museum of Natural History; and Stephen Buchmann, The Bee Works. The manuscript is titled, "**IMPORTATION OF NON-NATIVE BUMBLE BEES INTO NORTH AMERICA: POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF USING *BOMBUS TERRESTRIS* AND OTHER NON-NATIVE BUMBLE BEES FOR GREENHOUSE CROP POLLINATION IN CANADA, MEXICO, AND THE UNITED STATES,**" and is available online at www.pollinator.org and www.nappc.org .

Written in response to worldwide pressure to commercially distribute non-native bumble bees for greenhouse tomato production, this white paper discusses the status and potential effects of non-native bumble bees, such as *Bombus terrestris*, on native pollinators. The issue has far-ranging consequences, since the negative effects of this species have been documented in Japan, New Zealand, and other countries, and damages caused by invasive species during the last century have been estimated at over \$137 billion in the United States alone.

The authors describe the physical and behavioral characteristics of *Bombus terrestris*, discuss reports of suggested impacts on native species and ecosystems caused by the spread of exotic bumble bee populations in countries engaged in commercial importation. They also review the potential consequences of introducing and expanding populations of non-native bumble bees into Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Important recommendations presented by a team of experts that promote present and future regulations and management of native *Bombus* species as commercial pollinators in North America, include:

- 1) Continue to prohibit the importation of *Bombus terrestris* into Canada, Mexico, and the United States.
- 2) Fund research to promote economically viable commercial rearing and use of pollinators native to the Canada, Mexico, and the USA, both within those countries and within each pollinator's natural distribution range.

- 3) Continue to prohibit the importation of bees to North America from other continents, especially importation of additional non-native species. Any legislation should exempt the Western Honey Bee (*Apis mellifera*), as this species has a unique regulatory status, but should apply to all other bee species, including other honey bee species (e.g., *Apis cerana*).
- 4) Prohibit species of bees native to North America from being exported to commercial rearing facilities overseas and later returned to North America.
- 5) Use existing international instruments, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), to address issues regarding the importation, quarantine, and monitoring of bees, including international standards of inspection. Train customs personnel and port agricultural inspection officers regarding bumble bee regulations to create uniform enforcement of laws and prevent illegal importation.
- 6) Evaluate current importation practices to ensure that environmental laws are not being violated by the present commercial movement of *Bombus* species, and to create opportunities for tri-national agency cooperation.
- 7) Study and monitor species at risk, with special focus on *Bombus franklini* and *B. affinis*, which might be harmed by the importation of potential competitors and disease reservoirs such as *B. terrestris* and commercial *B. impatiens*. Consider potential economic and ecological costs when calculating the long-term effects of releasing non-native pollinators.
- 8) Consider restricting the transport of non-*Apis* bee species within North America (both between the USA, Canada, and Mexico, and between biologically distinct regions within each country) to areas beyond their existing ranges, to prevent establishment and spread of invasive bee populations and of associated exotic parasites and diseases. Any potential restrictions should specifically exempt honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) and certain non-*Apis* species already long-established and generally distributed in North America, such as the Alfalfa Leafcutting Bee, *Megachile rotundata*, but should include economically important species with restricted ranges such as *Bombus impatiens*.

The partners of the **North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC)** represent a collaboration of more than one hundred agencies, government and non-government institutions, garden and grower groups, scientists, and other stakeholders involved in pollinator conservation in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. The full list is available at <http://www.napppc.org/partners2005.html>. The Bee Importation White Paper was made possible through a grant from the C. S Fund. The opinions and recommendations expressed in this paper represent a consensus of the authors as members of a NAPPC Task Force, and may not necessarily reflect the views of all NAPPC partners, partner institutions, or other affiliates.

The **Pollinator Partnership Symposium** will be held on **October 18th** at the U.S. Department of Agriculture Jefferson Auditorium to highlight this and other research about pollinator declines, including the **NAS** study titled, “**Status of Pollinators in North America.**” Learn how public and private institutions and individual homeowners can help to conserve the animals responsible for pollinating up to one third of our food supply. Please contact the **Pollinator Partnership** and **NAPPC** at www.napppc.org or www.pollinator.org for further information and to register to attend.