

Mayor Soglin, Common Council Move to Protect Honey Bees and Other Pollinators Through Special Taskforce

October 23, 2014

The Madison Common Council adopted a resolution earlier this month directing the Madison Food Policy Council to lead a taskforce, comprised of mainly city staff, to research the problem of Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), which directly affects honey bees and other pollinators. The taskforce will provide recommendations to departments and the Common Council on local solutions to protect pollinators.

President Barack Obama released an Executive Memorandum earlier this year directing Federal Agencies to establish a Pollinator Health Taskforce to research and provide recommendations across departments to improve pollinator health and to educate the public. Madison's Pollinator Protection Taskforce (PPT) will monitor the progress of the federal taskforce, use best practices to inform its work, and review relevant recommendations from the federal government.

"Pollinator loss is a significant issue that threatens our food and agriculture system," said Mayor Paul Soglin. "While we appreciate the leadership of the Administration, we must look at local options to promote the health of some of our six-legged hardest workers."

The taskforce will involve numerous city departments, including Parks, Engineering, Planning, and Public Health and will be led by a small group of members of the Madison Food Policy Council. The taskforce is charged with reviewing each relevant department's current practices, best practices from other communities, and making recommendations to improve the health and habitat of pollinators on both city and private land.

"Monarch butterfly migration is at its lowest point ever and honey bee losses are at a 20-30% rate each year since 2006," said Nathan Clarke, the proprietor of MadUrban Bees, an urban bee keeping and honey production company based in Madison. "The problems of severe drought, global warming, and habitat loss, will compound these losses without significant intervention."

The taskforce will explore possible interventions including limitations of certain pesticides, increasing pollinator-friendly plantings on city land, and recommendations for property and homeowners.

"I am very pleased that we are moving forward on this very important issue," said Ald. Ledell Zellers, District 2 and Madison Food Policy Council member. "It is critical that we are leaders on this topic so that all of our neighborhoods can truly 'bee' friendly."

Taskforces recommendations are due to the Mayor and Common Council by August 15, 2015.

Contact:

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2014 NEIGHBORHOOD HABITAT CHALLENGE

City of Austin and the National Wildlife Federation challenge your Neighborhood to create homes for wildlife by taking the HABITAT CHALLENGE for POLLINATOR GARDENS!

Jester Estates, Windsor Park, Bouldin Creek, Crestview, Copperfield, Mueller, and other Austin neighborhoods have risen to the NEIGHBORHOOD HABITAT CHALLENGE.

This year make your neighborhood a **Winner for Wildlife!**



Take the Challenge, it's easy ...

1. Provide these habitat basics:

*** Provide Water Sources**

A key element for a variety of pollinators

*** Safeguard Pollinator Habitat**

Remove or prevent invasive plants, avoid pesticides

*** Provide Food**

Pollinators need a diversity of nectar/pollen sources

*** Provide Shelter**

Pollinators need places to nest and to overwinter

2. Neighborhood participates in a community habitat project such as removing invasive plants, planting trees, restoring a creek area, or planting a neighborhood butterfly garden.

3. An article about the habitat challenge is published in neighborhood newsletter and/or website.

4. Neighbors certify their properties with the National Wildlife Federation at www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife or with a COA pre-paid application by November 15, 2014.

5. Celebrate! The top three neighborhoods that complete all the requirements and certify the most new habitats between April 15th and November 15th, 2014 will be recognized by the City of Austin and eligible for prizes.

To request a pre-paid habitat certification application or for contest details contact the Wildlife Austin program: 512-978-2606 or <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/wildlife-austin>

