

Government Relations Report

by: Gene Brandi
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The effort to establish a memorandum of understanding between the USDA - Farm Service Agency, USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service and the American Beekeeping Federation and American Honey Producers Association is coming closer to reality as a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been sent to us for review. We approached USDA some time ago about establishing this more formal relationship between the bee industry and the aforementioned agencies in order to foster better communications so that USDA can take into greater consideration the needs of the beekeeping industry.

The purpose of this MOU is to establish a framework of cooperation among FSA, NRCS, ABF and AHPA to maintain and enhance the

productivity of honey bees on private and public lands. Such activities include, but are not limited to, honey bee and other pollinator habitat conservation projects, habitat restoration, technical assistance, delivery of information and educational materials, collaboration on habitat and pollinator research, and development of habitat restoration and enhancement techniques. We look forward to finalizing this agreement during in the near future and perhaps establishing MOU's with other government agencies as well.

You may recall that in 2013, the ABF was a co-petitioner along with The Pollinator Stewardship Council, AHPA, and several individual beekeepers, in a case which challenged the EPA registration of sulfoxaflor without sufficient bee toxicity data. Recently, the Ninth Circuit Court ruled in favor of the petitioners. The court vacated the Environmental Protection Agency's unconditional registration of sulfoxaflor, and remanded for the EPA to obtain further studies and data regarding the effects of sulfoxaflor on bees, as required by EPA regulations. The full decision can be found at:

<http://cdn.ca9.uscourts.gov/datastore/opinions/2015/09/10/13-72346.pdf>

In another matter involving EPA, the ABF and AHPA submitted joint comments on the proposal to mitigate exposure to bees from acutely toxic pesticide products on August 28. We did not support the proposal given that it was very narrow in scope and did not offer significant improvement in bee protection from pesticides. We anxiously await EPA's response to the comments received on this issue.

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