

March 13, 2020

Memo To: Minnesota Honey Producers Association  
From: Judy Erickson/Joe Birkholz  
Re: Legislative Update



It's Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, and that seems appropriate for all that has gone on this week. The COVID-19 issue has now moved front and center and will dominate the remainder of the 2019 Legislative Session. Legislative leadership will be working through the weekend to determine how to conduct business in light of COVID-19. One thing is very clear, they are going to streamline and prioritize what business they need to conclude this year. When they have provided a path forward, we will let you know as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, we have followed a number of hearings on pollinator legislation and MHPA Chair David Schroeder met with a number of Senators to provide background on MHPA and priority issues for this session. Those meetings were very good as having an expert discuss the industry and key concerns is always well received. I think it is safe to say each of the Senators we met with learned something new.

Governor Walz presented his Supplemental Budget on March 12, and we had anticipated some recommendations for funding in a variety of areas, he determined to hold \$1.5 billion of the surplus in reserve, citing the uncertain future ahead and wanting to have resources if needed to deal with the current public health crisis.

#### **Bill Update.**

##### **CRP: HF 3431, HF 2957, & HF 3513**

There are a number of bills in the to provide one-time state funding to incentivize landowners to enroll or re-enroll in the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP payments are made to farmers in exchange for taking low-production agriculture land out of production and put conservation practices in place including pollinator habitat and riparian buffer strips. Current rate payments were set by the 2018 Federal Farm Bill and are not as competitive as they have been in past years.

[HF 3431](#), authored by Rep. Brad Tabke (DFL-Shakopee), appropriates \$6.5 million in one-time payments to incentivize landowners to enroll their land in general CRP and bring more federal dollars to Minnesota in the form of CRP payments.

[HF 2957/SF3263](#) authored by Rep. Rick Hansen (DFL-St. Paul) and Sen. Carrie Rudd (R-Breezy Point) appropriates a lower amount of \$1.75 million in one-time payments that will be used for continuous CRP, which is used for conservation practices on land deemed more environmentally sensitive. These bills have had hearings in the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee on 2/27, and much of the discussion revolved around how much the final amount of money might be as well as what the criteria will be for landowners seeking the state incentives.

We were hoping there might be some funding in the supplemental for this effort. We will now have to wait and see how the legislature responds once we get through this crisis.

##### **LCCMR: SF 3525**

While the Senate has introduced their version of the LCCMR recommendations, the House bill will be introduced on Monday, with a hearing scheduled for Tuesday afternoon. There is a bit of controversy surrounding this year's package and as a result, the House and Senate bill differ. The 2020 package does include a number of pollinator related research that MHPA supported last summer. We will be monitoring this and hopefully these projects will get enacted this year.

#### **Other Legislation:**

[HF1293/SF1360](#). These bills were introduced last session but HF1293 had its first hearing this week in the House Agriculture and Food Finance and Policy Division. The House bill is authored by Rep. Rick Hansen (DFL-Cottage Grove) and Sen. Fong Hawj (DFL-St.Paul). This bill requires additional warning labels on corn or soybean seed coated or treated with neonicotinoid pesticide. Rep. Hansen emphasized this is an informational tag. Erin Ruup, Pollinate Minnesota and Chris Cowen testified in favor of the bill. Ruup said that this "closes the education gap."

[HF1255/SF3609](#). These bills authorize cities to adopt pesticide control ordinances. Authored by Rep. Jean Wagenuis (DFL-Mpls) and Sen. Kari Dziedzic (DFL-Mpls). The House bill had a hearing in late February in the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee and is currently pending in the House Agriculture and Food Finance and Policy Division. The Senate bill is pending in the Environment and Natural Resources Policy and Legacy Committee and is currently not scheduled for a hearing.

#### **Looking Ahead:**

Normally, we'd be writing about bills meeting first, second and third deadlines. But as we wrote at the top, things are in a state of flux. Once we know the next steps for the 2019 session, we will let you know.