

Promoting Pollinator Conservation

Sustainable Agriculture Fact Sheet

July 2017

Crop: Two-thirds of the world's crops

Need: Protecting native pollinators and supporting honeybees

States: All Western states

Background: Pollinators are necessary for the reproduction of more than two-thirds of the world's crop species, including alfalfa seed and numerous fruits and vegetables grown in the West. Today, native pollinators are more important than ever as honeybees become more expensive and difficult to acquire because of disease, pests and Colony Collapse Disorder. Protecting, enhancing or providing natural habitat on farms is the best way to conserve native pollinators and support local honeybees.

The Problem: Farmers, and the advisors who serve them, need training on how to use federal programs and on-the-ground methods for implementing pollinator-conservation habitat. Xerces Society, a non-profit environmental group, offers a popular Pollinator Conservation Planning Short Course in the Western Region and throughout the nation, but the demand is so high that many people are turned away. Originally budgeted for 30 participants, the Short Courses are often at or above capacity, frequently with 100 would-be registrants.

The Research: Western SARE provides funding for the first 30 Short Course participants, and the Xerces Society has leveraged funds in order to charge additional participants for training materials only. The Society hopes to increase the number of Short Courses per state by raising funds from the private sector. The Xerces Society is using both pre- and post-Short Course evaluations with attendees to gauge knowledge and expectations, and conducting follow-up surveys to measure implementation.

The Impact: Early data show that if, on average, a Short Course has 30 participants, five of those will enroll land in a conservation program. Additionally, each course participant, on average, goes out and influences 100 acres in a way that supports pollinator conservation, such as crop consulting, extension work, or work with landowners in reducing pesticide use or tillage practices.

The training is very much nuts and bolts. Each participant receives a training toolkit with Natural Resource Conservation Service documents relevant to the region outlining conservation programs and practices, information on selecting wildflowers for pollinator conservation and farm management guidelines for conserving native pollinators. They also receive a 400 page full-color Xerces Society textbook.

The Challenges Ahead: There is an amazing diversity of native bee species in the U.S. (over 4,000) and these incredibly efficient crop pollinators have been overlooked by the conservation and agriculture communities in the past. Ongoing research is needed to know their population dynamics and maintain their numbers.

Links:

Overview: [Western Pollinator Conservation Planning Short Course](#)

Feature article: <http://www.westernsare.org/Learning-Center/From-the-Field/Pollinator-Conservation>

Training materials: <https://xerces.org/>

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