

Recommendation³⁴⁵
Pollinator Land Use for the SRS

Background:

At the March 2017 full board meeting Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board (SRS CAB), the Forest Department shared that ten acres of native “flowering plants are annually sown to enhance pollinator habitat where it was once lacking diversity.”ⁱ

In June 2014, The White House released a Presidential Memorandum that “pollinators contribute substantially to the economy of the United States and are vital to keeping fruits, nuts, and vegetables in our diets. Honeybee pollination alone adds more than \$15 billion in value to agricultural crops each year in the United States. Over the past few decades, there has been a significant loss of pollinators, including honeybees, native bees, birds, bats, and butterflies, from the environment. The problem is serious and requires immediate attention to ensure the sustainability of our food production systems, avoid additional economic impact on the agricultural sector, and protect the health of the environmentⁱⁱ.”

The loss associated with pollinators continues to grow, and for 2013-2014, the number of migrating Monarch butterflies reached its lowest recorded population. The ongoing loss of commercial honeybee colonies may threaten the economic stability of bee keeping and pollination operations, which poses a risk of agriculture and food production. The loss of native bees, which are studied less frequently than their colony counterparts, are also believed to be in decline due to loss of forage lands, exposure to pesticides, poor nutrition and other stress factors.

With all those factors affecting pollinators, the Presidential Memorandum established the Pollinator Health Task Force to continue to study and understand pollinator losses, and, to develop strategies for affordable seed mixes and plants for maintenance of honeybees and other pollinators.

The Savannah River Site is a unique position being a protected land area the size of Atlanta, Georgia. Part of the current land is used to maintain a site buffer, and large tracts of land are used to cover closed fields, waste sites and ponds. Given that this space is unlikely to be used for other purposes, it seems viable to use this available land as space for pollination plants.

Recommendation:

The Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board recommends that the Department of Energy:

1. Work with the Forest Service and Savannah River Ecology Lab to be represented in the Pollinator Health Task Force to learn more about how space at SRS could be used for pollination.
2. Collaborate with the Region IV Environmental Protection Agency to develop a plan for pollination, including funding, management and sustainability.
3. Given that funding may be a concern, consider working with local gardening clubs and associations that may be willing to assume some costs of the projects.
4. Based on feasibility, test the honey produced for contaminants.

Recommendation #345
Adopted May 23, 2017
Sponsored by the Facilities Disposition & Site Remediation Committee

ⁱ Forest Service – Savannah River Fiscal Year 2016 Highlights. Presented by DeVela J. Clark, Forest Manager, March 27, 2017.

ⁱⁱ <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/20/presidential-memorandum-creating-federal-strategy-promote-health-honey-b>