

New Mexico Pollinator Protection

Overview for Water and Natural Resources Interim Committee

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Pollinator Types

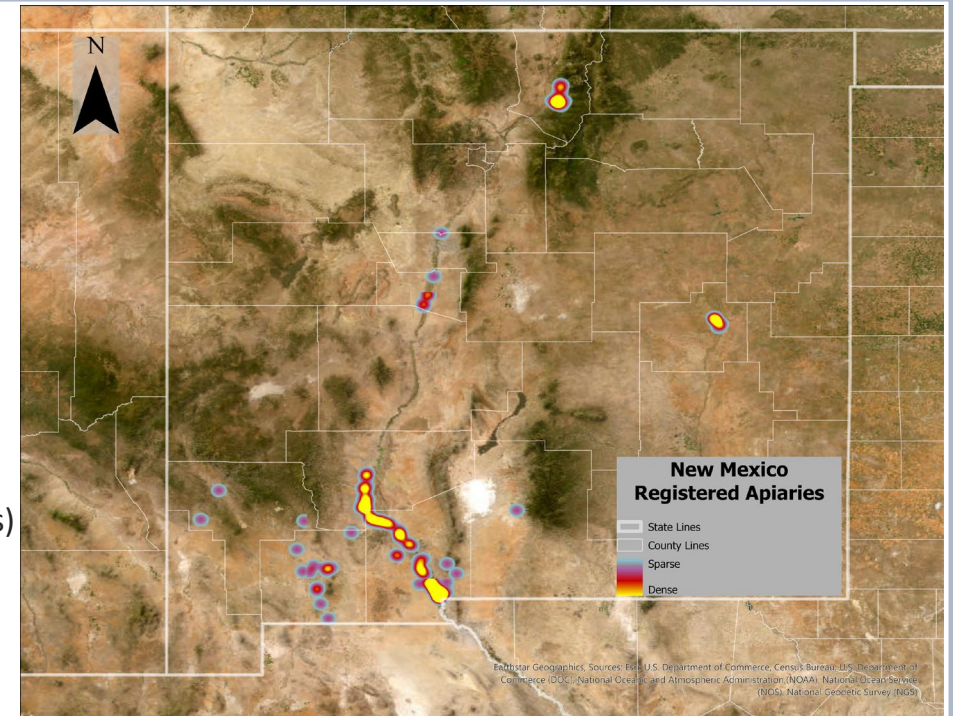
- Bees (1,050+ species in New Mexico ^[1])
- Butterflies (300+ species in New Mexico ^[2])
- Hummingbirds (18 species in New Mexico ^[3])
- Bats (2-3 flower-visiting species in New Mexico ^[4,5])
- Flies, beetles, moths, wasps & others (highly diverse)

Native Pollinators in New Mexico

- Importance
 - Natural land conservation (maintaining plant community & watershed health) ^[6]
 - Value to indigenous communities
 - Wildlife habitat
 - Outdoor recreation
 - Agricultural sustainability
 - Improved yields & quality in certain crops (e.g., cotton) ^[7]
 - Pollination of melons, apples, cherries, peaches, squash, beans, & more ^[8,9]

Honey Bees in New Mexico

- Unknown but presumed rising number of non-commercial beekeepers
 - No requirement for all beekeepers to report locations or hives
- Commercial beekeepers required to register with NMDA
 - 9 currently-registered beekeepers in New Mexico (117 locations; approx. 4,800 hives)
 - Number of registered beekeepers gradually waning in New Mexico
- Barriers to large-scale honey bee industry
 - Majority of the state is arid
 - Honey bee water consumption (higher than native species) requires supplementation ^[10]
 - Honey bee density often necessitates nutritional supplementation ^[11]
 - Many prime locations are not available for registration
 - State law prohibits commercial apiary establishment within 1.5 miles of existing commercial apiary
 - Approx. ½ of land is state or federal, with policies that may inhibit usage for honey bees
 - Few crops require honey bee pollination services ^[12]
 - Economic pressure from drought and low honey prices
- Honey Bee value to New Mexico
 - Income from honey bees sent to pollinate California crops
 - Income from honey, wax, and other honey bee products
 - Pollination supplementation for tree fruit and melon production, alfalfa and onion seed production



Pollinator Declines

- Many native pollinator populations in decline worldwide
- Honey bee losses increasing in many regions (worldwide not in decline) ^[13]
- Main causes of global pollinator declines ^[14,15]
 - Habitat loss & fragmentation (urbanization, climate)
 - Pests & diseases
 - Prolonged exposure to pesticides & pollution
 - Declining genetic diversity
 - Bee management practices (spread of pests & disease, resource competition)
- Main causes believed to drive New Mexico pollinator declines
 - Habitat loss due to drought (main issue, according to conversation with subject-matter experts)
 - Pests & diseases (especially *Varroa* mite in honey bees)
 - Improper pesticide usage (localized, not known to be a widespread issue in New Mexico based on survey)

National Pollinator Concern

- Presidential Memorandum
 - *Creating a Federal Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators* (2014)
- Pollinator Health Task Force
 - *National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators* (2015)
 - Directives including creation of pollinator protection plans by states
- Over 30 states currently have pollinator protection plans
 - Varied length & complexity

New Mexico Pollinator Legislation

- 2016 & 2017: memorials passed to increase public awareness
- 2019: bill passed to create pollinator protection license plate
 - Fees designated for pollinator protection activities
- 2024: memorial passed to request NMDA convene a working group to...
 - Develop pollinator protection plan
 - Provide pollinator protection recommendations
 - Create preliminary pollinator outreach materials

New Mexico Pollinator Protection Plan

- New Mexico Pollinator Protection Plan Working Group (convened 2024)
 - Meeting regularly
 - Developing NM Pollinator Protection Plan
 - Introduction to pollinators, importance & status
 - Best Practices for land stewards, beekeepers, farmers, ranchers, gardeners & pest control
 - Implementation of plan recommendations
 - Aims to have protection plan draft for external review in late-spring 2026

Resources

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- [15] Brunet, J and FP Fragoso. 2024. What are the Main Reasons for the worldwide decline in pollinator populations? *CABI Reviews* 19(1).

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