


Bonnie Morse



June 20, 2023

Jennifer Berger
California Department of Food and Agriculture
Integrated Pest Control Branch
1220 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Application for Public seat of the California Apiary Board,

Dear Ms Berger,

I am a small scale professional beekeeper in Marin County. I have been a beekeeper since 2007. It was a hobby that quickly grew into an obsession as it combined my interests in plants, the environment, and animal care. In the urban & suburban environment, I am continually encouraged by the changes that honey bees inspire in those who care for them. I see more native plants in the gardens of backyard beekeepers, less pesticide use, and more public outreach to share this knowledge.

In recent weeks, I was made aware of the changes that have been recommended concerning the registration fee for backyard beekeepers. While it is unlikely that these changes would impact me or my clients, due to small apiary sizes and likely lack of current interest locally to enforce, putting a bad policy on record can potentially have long term and far reaching negative impacts and be extremely difficult to change down the road.

Carefully constructing thoughtful regulations that consider needs and concerns of shareholders can save time and money in the long run. An example is the bee ordinance in Tiburon, California. It was changed because the Council was aware of an increasing interest in bees, but pushed it through before reaching out to any actual beekeepers. In the decade since it was passed by the City Council, the only two permits that have been issued (despite the likely 100+ beekeepers in the jurisdiction) were triggered by neighbor complaints...of yellow jacket activity. Once this erroneous process was initiated, beekeepers had (among other things) pay a \$350 permit fee, get the written approval of all contiguous neighbors and provide architectural drawings showing hive set backs. All because of mistaken identity of yellow jackets and a poorly written ordinance. It is only a matter of time

before something similar happens again. With a little extra time, these issues could have been avoided.

From what I have learned from Tiburon and other poorly formed regulations, without getting the buy in of the local organizations who are currently shouldering the burden of self policing, the new regulations could have the opposite effect in local communities. In terms of registering, I do not disagree that more can be done to limit pest and disease transmission, track problems, etc. among backyard beekeepers, but a \$100 per year registration fee would likely also create unnecessary divisions between backyard beekeepers and the commercial beekeepers who crafted these rules without sufficient input from those who would be impacted. And, frankly, would likely be ignored by those already flying under the radar.

It would seem that one thing currently lacking is data. If appointed to this seat, I would reach out to all local organizations across the state to collect information (with anonymity) that could be of assistance in crafting well thought out legislation that meets the intent of the CDFA and Apiary Board, as well as the people who would be impacted. Likely statistics per region / association collected would include: number of members / est. number in and outside the organization in geographical area, estimated % of beekeepers who currently register, reasons why beekeepers would / would not want to register, top beekeeping issues, how AFB colonies are destroyed (if a solution exists), any local needs that potentially need to be addressed at State level, etc.

Despite the importance of commercial beekeeping operations for queen rearing and pollination in California, paired with high numbers of backyard beekeepers, a history of lax regulations has made California the wild west. Relative to other states, we have limited regulations and assistance. Most local support currently comes individuals and community association level. There's a chasm between where we are and what some would like to see, but it is vital that the first steps are made with intention and collaboration.

While the task may seem daunting, it is a worthy one. I am eager to be part of the solution and would welcome an opportunity to work on the crucial first steps to ensure long term success in this important endeavor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bonnie Morse', with a stylized, flowing script.

Bonnie Morse

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND
AGRICULTURE CALIFORNIA APIARY ADVISORY BOARD
PROSPECTIVE MEMBER APPOINTMENT
QUESTIONNAIRE

APPLICANT PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name: Bonnie Morse Date: 6/19/23

PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION

Name of Company: Bonnie Bee & Company

How long have you participated in this industry? Company was started in 2011

List names and dates of industry, trade, associations, and/or programs you are/and or have been associated with:

Marin County Beekeepers, member 2007-present, organizing member 2009-present
Eastern Apicultural Society, Life member, 2012+
Bee Audacious, co-founder, director, 2015-present

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Check one. Indicate which member position you are seeking to fill and answer the associated questions.

☐ BEEKEEPER ☒ PUBLIC MEMBER ☐ SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT

Do you have a financial interest in the sales or marketing of bees, pollination or other apiary products and/or services? ☒ YES ☐ NO

If yes, please explain: Consult with backyard beekeepers / private lessons, small scale (9 hives or fewer per apiary) hive management, workshops, honey & candle sales, nuc sales

Briefly list your credentials related to entomological science, apiary breeding, or general beekeeping:

- Queen breeding / small scale nuc production since 2012
- Have done volunteer work for experience with Randy Oliver, Kirk Webster and Melanie Kirby
- Consulting and hive management (individuals, ranches, vineyards, etc.)

[Signature]
SIGNATURE

6/19/23
DATE

Bonnie Morse

Occupation

Bonnie Bee & Company | Co-Owner | [REDACTED]

2011 to Present

Provide local bee consulting, private lessons, and hive management. Teach classes and workshops.

Affiliations and Credentials

Bee Audacious | Director and Co-founder

2015 to Present

Morphed from an international, invitational dialogue conference in 2016, to a regional Bay Area conference on habitat preservation in 2019. Now Focuses on improving pollinator habitat in Marin County through educational outreach and demonstration gardens.

Cornell Master Beekeeper Program | Master Beekeeper

Daniel Stralka Memorial Pollinator Garden | [Dominican University of California](#)

Installed 2022 to 2023

Designed, fundraised \$55,000, worked with students over 3 semesters on planning, organized volunteers and donations for ½ acre garden, and will continue to help maintain and use as a teaching and research site.

Eastern Apicultural Society (EAS) | Certified Master Beekeeper and Life Member

Ecologically Sound Practices committee of Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority | Contributor

2019 to Present

Group originated as the Fire and Environment Working Group of the Marin Conservation League. Members collaborate with fire professionals to help ensure that vegetation management for fire protection considers biodiversity, water conservation, carbon sequestration, etc.

International Society of Arboriculture | [REDACTED]

2001 - Present

Marin County Beekeepers | Member

2007- Present

Organizing member since 2009. Responsible for annual speaker series since 2013.

Marin Biodiversity Corridor Initiative | Co-founding member

2021 - Present

Alameda County Beekeepers Association | Member

2020 - Present

Speaking engagements have included:

Regional and State organizations:

- * Eastern Apicultural Society
- * Nevada State Beekeepers
- * Oregon Honey Festival
- * University of Utah

Local organizations:

- * Alameda County Beekeepers Association
- * Ecologically Sound Practices
- * Heidrun Meadery “Bee Experience”
- * Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT)
- * Marin Conservation League
- * Marin County Beekeepers
- * Marin Garden Club
- * Nevada County Beekeepers
- * Sonoma County Beekeepers Association

References:

Belle Cole, [REDACTED]

Ecologically Sound Practices Partnership (ESP), Co-chair Marin Conservation League, Board of Directors, member

Denise Lucy, [REDACTED]

Executive Director and Professor of Business & Organizational Studies, Institute for Leadership Studies, Andrew P. Barowsky School of Business Dominican University of California

Randy Oliver, [REDACTED]

ScientificBeekeeping.com

Michael Swezy, [REDACTED]

Ecologically Sound Practices Partnership (ESP), co-chair Novato Fire District, Vegetation Management Marin Municipal Water District, Watershed manager, Retired

Caorline Yelle, [REDACTED]

Pope Canyon Queens

Michael Zilber, [REDACTED]

Heidrun Meadery, General Manager