

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
CALIFORNIA STATE APIARY BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**California Department of Food and Agriculture
2800 Gateway Oaks Drive
Sacramento, CA 95833**

**June 6, 2019
9:30 AM**

The meeting of the California State Apiary Board was called to order at approximately 9:30 am, on June 6, 2019, in Sacramento, California by Board Chair Roger Everett.

Board Members Present

Roger Everett, Chair (via phone) Harold "Buzz" Landon
Brent Ashurst

Board Members Absent

David Bradshaw

CDFA Staff Present

Nick Condos, Director Plant Health and Pest Prevention Services
Andy Cline, Assistant Director Plant Health and Pest Prevention Services
Victoria Hornbaker, Environmental Program Manager II, Integrated Pest Control
Keith Morris, Program Supervisor, Border Protection Stations
Patricia Bohls, Environmental Scientist, Bee Safe Program
Gary Leslie, Special Assistant, Plant Health and Pest Prevention Services

Presenters and Members of the Industry and Public

Bryan Ashurst, California State Beekeepers Association (via phone)
Carly Ashurst, California State Beekeepers Association
Sandy Elles, Executive Director California Agricultural Commissioners and Sealers Association
Steve Godlin, Beekeeper
Rick Gurrola, Agricultural Commissioner, Tehama County (via phone)
Sosan Madanat, Lighthouse Public Affairs
Elina L. Niño, Scientific Advisor, California State Beekeepers Association
Jackie Park-Burris, California State Beekeepers Association
Karli Quinn, Ag Association Management Services, Inc
David Stoffel, Biologist, Tehama County

Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act

Gary Leslie acknowledged compliance with the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act, pursuant to Government Code Section 11120-11132. However, he indicated a quorum of board members was not present at predesignated public-accessible locations, therefore the board would not be able to vote or make motions on agenda topics.

Welcome and Introductions

Roger Everett welcomed all the attendees participating in the meeting.

Public Comment

Mr. Everett asked for public comment and received none.

Approval of Minutes

As a quorum of the board was not present, no vote to approve prior meeting minutes was taken.

New Board Members

Gary Leslie noted that Brent Ashurst had been appointed to the Board in March and welcomed him. He noted Robert Huckaby had also been appointed to the Board in March 2019, but resigned from the position effective May 31, 2019. Mr. Everett asked how CDFA planned to proceed with filling the vacancy. Mr. Leslie reported recruitment had been completed in February 2019 and the applications of several candidates were still on hand. It was also noted both the Board and the California State Beekeepers Association had previously recommended to Secretary Ross that Larry Lima be appointed to the Board. The general consensus from members of the Board and public present was CDFA should contact Mr. Lima to see if he was still interested in the position and, if so, proceed with his appointment.

Gentle Africanized Honeybee (gAHB) Importation Update

Andy Cline, reported he had been in contact with Dr. Jamie Ellis of the University of Florida. Dr. Ellis is coordinating activities with researchers proposing to import gAHB from Puerto Rico to the mainland United States. According to Dr. Ellis, there are no planned importations to the mainland at this time; however, research is continuing in Puerto Rico and talks with USDA are ongoing. Dr. Ellis will provide Mr. Cline with updates as the research and talks continue.

Dr. Tugrul Giray, who is involved in gAHB research is proposing a three-day meeting, in Puerto Rico, in August 2019 for scientists and regulators. This meeting would provide opportunity for participants to witness gAHB in its native environment and provide input on a framework for a certification program for moving the bees to individual states. Nick Condos noted, if CDFA were to send a representative to the meeting, the Department would need to use funds from the Bee Safe program to cover travel. There was no consensus from the meeting participants as to whether CDFA should send a representative to the meeting or not.

Dr. Elina Nino inquired as to whether or not CDFA planned to move forward with regulation to prevent the importation of gAHB into California. Nick Condos reported CDFA had no current plans to propose additional laws or regulations to regulate gAHB.

Bee Safe Program Update

Patricia Bohls reported for fiscal year 2018/19, CDFA had contracts with 40 counties participating in the Bee Safe Program. In reviewing Report 10s (which detail apiary work performed by counties) from 2019, Ms. Bohls noted over 240,000 bee colonies from more than 850 apiaries were registered. Rick Gurrola asked if there would be unspent funds from the FY 2018/19 program. Ms. Bohls reported several counties had yet to submit invoicing, so it is uncertain whether any funds will be left or not. Bee Safe work plans for FY 2019/20 have gone out to all participating counties for review and signature; to date, CDFA has received work plans from 43 counties for FY 2019/20.

In April 2019, CDFA staff, in conjunction with several county biologists experienced in apiary inspection work, conducted six training sessions to familiarize less-experienced county staff in conducting apiary inspections. Approximately 140 county employees attended the training sessions.

County staff have been instructed to submit suspect American foulbrood (AFB) samples to USDA's Beltsville, MD laboratory for analysis. Dave Stoffel inquired why the CDFA lab does not process AFB samples, pointing out that he felt this would simplify the chain of custody process. Nick Condos stated that this USDA lab currently processes AFB samples free-of-charge; CDFA potentially could process the samples, but would need to recover costs from Bee Safe program funds. Dr. Nino inquired as to whether or not the USDA bee lab at UC Davis could potential process AFB samples. Ms. Bohls was assigned the task of exploring the USDA lab there to see if they have the capability to process AFB samples. CDFA is also currently contacting air districts throughout the state to determine requirements for burning hives in the event AFB is detected.

CDFA is planning several outreach efforts, including attending fairs and bee conferences, to further educate beekeepers about registration and other Bee Safe Program requirements.

Penalty Matrix Regulations

Nick Condos informed the group that many joint CDFA/County programs use a penalty matrix, set in regulation, to provide uniformity in county enforcement. He asked for input from the group as to whether or not CDFA should pursue similar regulations for the apiary program. Brent Ashurst expressed he felt some inspectors were being over exuberant in enforcing apiary laws; Mr. Everett echoed this opinion.

Rick Gurrola expressed support for the idea of penalty matrix and stated beekeepers concerned with regulation enforcement should work through their local Agricultural Commissioners to resolve issues. Mr. Everett expressed concern for the development of additional regulations and retorted rather than making more regulations, some should be removed. Bryan Ashurst detailed issues he is having regarding changes in enforcement policy in Riverside County.

Nick Condos pointed out that current laws have been on the books for many years; however, because funding was lacking, they have not been enforced for quite some time. Now that funding is available through the Bee Safe, these laws are being enforced. He and others suggested a review of current laws and, if changes should be made, the beekeeping industry should seek legislative sponsorship to pursue those changes. The general consensus of the group was that this review should be undertaken.

BeeWhere Program Update

Sandy Ellis emphasized the BeeWhere Program is designed to help the apiary industry protect their hives. In deference to the beekeeping industry, and because the program was slow in rolling out, counties have deferred leveeing registration enforcement penalties (authorized by the passage of AB 2468 in 2018) until 2021.

Ms. Ellis shared educational cards designed to make beekeepers aware of the program and registration requirements. Ms. Ellis also shared statistical data for the program including: 903 beekeepers have registered under the program and 208,000 colonies have been mapped in the BeeWhere Program. Ms. Ellis noted that the program is far short of complete bee colony mapping; however, complete mapping was not expected in 2019.

Ms. Ellis reported the “Bee Check” feature of the program, by which pest control applicators can check the location of mapped colonies, is yet to be activated. Board and industry members present stressed the importance of this feature being activated as soon as possible.

Dr. Nino reported the BeeWhere program prevents beekeepers with less than ten colonies from registering their colonies. Ms. Ellis and Mr. Gurrola said they would work with the program developers to look into and address this issue.

Apiary Importation Trend Analysis

Mr. Leslie summarized a report detailing trends in apiary shipments moving through border stations for the past five years. Among other things, the analysis concludes 1.82 million colonies entered California in FY 2018/19; nearly all shipments arrive between the months of October and February; approximately 20 percent of all shipments come from southern states and 80 percent from northern states; the busiest station in terms of apiary shipments is Truckee, on Interstate 80; Idaho and North Dakota ship the most bees to California; significantly more hitchhiking pests are found on shipments originating in southern states; and most pest infested shipments are released from the border station in two hours or less. This report will be posted on CDFA’s public website for viewing.

Harold “Buzz” Landon asked if there were guidelines established for cleaning or otherwise handling pest infested shipments at border stations. Mr. Leslie reported pest mitigations are determined on a case-by-case basis depending on the pest type and degree of infestation. Mr. Landon suggested some sort of public outreach materials be developed and made available to educate beekeepers on what to expect if pests are found on their shipments.

Pre-Importation Inspection Working Group Update

Mr. Condos explained a working group was put together to look at options for pre-inspecting and certifying apiary shipments in southern states. Initially, the group examined the possibility of establishing a bee inspection station outside of California. However, the group quickly decided it would be better to conduct a Florida pilot project where additional staff could be sent from other states to assist Florida inspectors in pre-inspecting shipments destined to California. Talks are ongoing with Florida and industry officials to further develop this idea.

North Dakota Pre-Inspection Program Update

Keith Morris reported, under a pilot program conducted in North Dakota in 2018, California inspectors were sent there to inspect bee colonies destined to California prior to shipment. Eleven North Dakota shippers participated in the 2018 program and over 47,000 hives were inspected and certified. Certified shipments were allowed to enter California without inspection at the border stations. Talks are ongoing with North Dakota and Idaho officials to continue program in 2019 and expand it to include Idaho.

Mr. Condos explained the ultimate goal of this program is to expand it to any northern states interested in participating and turn the inspection and certification authority over to officials in the state of origin.

Re-establishment of State Apiary Program

Mr. Condos gave an overview of why CDFA believes it would be beneficial to re-establish a State Apiary Program, including a State Apiary inspector – most importantly to establish consistency in apiary law and regulation enforcement. In the short-term, Mr. Condos suggested CDFA might contract with a county having a person with a high degree of apiary knowledge who would act as the State Apiarist.

Mr. Everett requested copies of current apiary laws and regulations for review. Gary Leslie said he would provide links to the code to the Board. Mr. Condos said CDFA would also provide a draft of the responsibilities he envisioned for a State Apiarist.

After lengthy discussion it was decided the Board would take up this issue at their next meeting. In the meantime, CDFA would set aside FY 2019/20 Bee Safe funding currently earmarked from CDFA administrative costs to fund the State Apiarist position. Should the Board recommend to move forward with establishing a state program, this money could be used to fund the State Apiarist position.

Next meeting

It was decided the next Board meeting would be scheduled in conjunction with the next meeting of the California State Beekeepers Association Board of Directors meeting to be held in September.

Adjourn

Roger Everett adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:45 AM.