

## Editorial Update on New Jersey's Proposed Beekeeping Regulations

A number of years ago I attended an NJ Beekeepers Meeting where the guest speaker was from the NJ Department of Agriculture. His opening line was "Hi, I am here from the State and I am here to help you". That was a great opening line and drew laughs and guffaws from the attendees comprised of farmers and beekeepers from across the State. Farmers and beekeepers have long kept one eye open when dealing with the State on issues of "trust to do the right thing".

Good reason apparently, since Fisher and Zoltowski from the NJ Dept. of Ag, supported the authoring of the sadly inaccurate and much disdained beekeeping proposal. The proposal went up for public comment early this year and the public responded with a resounding "shot down in flames" vote of over 1,000 against and less than 10 in favor.

Oh, but it is not over. The proposal will come back, re-written to some degree or other. Hopefully it will be more enlightened and scientifically accurate than the last proposal.

My summary of what was wrong with the former proposal:

- It was full of inaccuracies about the science of beekeeping and written by people who knew next to nothing about caring for bees.
- It tells property owners that whether they own ¼ acre (typical suburban lot) or anything less than 5 acres, they can have only 2 hives on their property. There is no distinction between ¼ acre and up to 5 acres. A waiver can be applied for, but it is a complicated, bureaucratic process that can easily be dismissed and denied.
- It eliminated city dwellers from keeping bees on rooftops by making the space restrictions unnecessarily small.
- It redefined the term "commercial" so that "commercial" no longer meant just selling honey or pollination services; it had more to do with how large an operation the beekeeper had. Larger operations were governed by looser regulations while smaller operations were subject to more strict regulations. This distinction also created a barrier to market entry for hobbyists and small scale beekeepers trying to grow their business.
- On residential properties 5 acres or greater a small beekeeper may have up to 10 hives, but again, a waiver is required. Otherwise, only 2 hives are permitted.
- All the rules mentioned above would have to be enforced by local municipalities...your town's budget dollars siphoned off to enforce a bad idea by the State.

The honeybee is the official NJ State insect, yet New Jersey almost became the State with the most restrictive regulations, ensuring a reduction in beekeepers and honeybees. In apparent ignorance of the honeybee's endangered status, and instead of supporting those who raise and care for bees, the NJ Department of Agriculture acted with bureaucratic abuse of power. All residents need to be vigilant and outspoken whenever the revised proposal comes up for public comment, and let their voices be heard in Trenton.

To be fair, we do have some politicians in Trenton who are on the ball, thank goodness. On February 2nd, 2018, Assemblyman Ronald S. Dancer (R-LD12) and Senator Jeff Van Drew (D-LD1) sponsored Concurrent Resolutions in opposition to the proposed beekeeping resolutions as "inconsistent with the intent of the Legislature" stating that unless the rules are amended or withdrawn within 30 days, they will seek to invalidate the rules. [You are urged to contact your legislators and urge them to support these Concurrent Resolutions.](#)

For more information see <http://nwba.njbeekeepers.org/njda.html>

