



The New Jersey Beekeepers Association

www.njbeekeepers.org

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NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE IS AT IT AGAIN!

NJ Board of Agriculture to Vote on Adoption of Beekeeping Regulations March 27, 2019

Ewing, NJ: More than 3-1/2 years after the authorizing legislation was adopted that gave it the authority to write statewide standards for keeping honey bees, and after a disastrous initial effort in late 2017 that led to over 1,100 negative comments from academics, legislators, beekeepers, environmental commissions, town councils and county agricultural boards, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture seems poised to adopt regulations that still don't get it right.

The Department's staff has even ignored resolutions passed by delegates to the Department's own annual agricultural convention in February that called for further dialogue with beekeepers and other interested parties before moving ahead with the current draft of the regulations:

<https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/conventions/2019/2019%20Resolution%2014%20-%20Beekeeping%20FINAL.pdf>.

According to New Jersey Beekeepers Association (NJBA) Legislative Liaison Janet A. Katz, Secretary of Agriculture Douglas H. Fisher is pushing the State Board of Agriculture to adopt the current draft and has not responded to the NJBA's letter or phone calls offering to work collaboratively with the Department to fix the remaining problems with the regulations.

We think that some members of the State Board of Agriculture have come to understand that this issue is much larger than just the concerns of beekeepers about how their craft will be regulated: the whole system of policy-making for the agriculture industry in New Jersey is at risk if the Secretary and his Department staff can ram through policies and procedures that are inconsistent with resolutions adopted by Delegates at annual Conventions.

NJBA hopes that a majority of the State Board will assert their authority, and the relevance of the annual Convention system of agricultural policy-making (and also protect beekeeping in New Jersey), by voting down the Secretary's misguided regulations and setting up the revisions committee called for by the Convention Resolutions.

We believe that if we can work together, we can get this right.

While the currently proposed regulations are an improvement over those initially published for public comment in December, 2017, there are still areas that will not carry out the Legislature's intent to support beekeeping throughout New Jersey:

- Despite following all the standards in the regulations, a beekeeper could still be shut down based on vague language about public health and safety.
- The regulations still allow delegation of the Department's bee health inspection role to municipalities even though this was not ever a part of the authorizing legislation;
- Beekeepers would be the only livestock sector in the state subject to an education requirement
- The waiver system is an unworkable mess with poor definitions and procedures and no real standards.

About the NJBA: We are a not-for-profit 501(c)(5) composed of over 1,700 New Jersey residents involved in all phases of beekeeping in New Jersey. Our mission is to promote, support and educate the public about beekeeping and the beekeeping industry.

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