
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TITLE: Bee-Safe Community Resolution

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Motion to approve resolution endorsing “Bee-Safe” policies and procedures.

POLICY CONSIDERATION: Is the City Council supportive of declaring the City of St. Louis Park as a Bee-Safe community by providing pollinator areas, educating the public on the benefits of such areas, and passing a resolution in support of these efforts?

SUMMARY: At the request of the Council, staff presented a report to provide background on declaring the City of St. Louis Park as a Bee-Safe Community at their November 10, 2014 Study Session.

Recent research has found that native and non-native bee (i.e. honeybees) populations, and other pollinator populations, have been declining. This is due to a number of factors, including pervasive insecticide use, habitat loss, pathogens, and diseases. The City of St. Louis Park has been using Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices for over 15 years related to grass and turf and only chemically treats selected park turf areas, such as ball fields and high use parks, to reduce the wear and tear on the turf. A majority of mowed areas in the City park system are left untreated and provide large areas of dandelion and white clover growths which are ideal early spring plants for pollinators (considered “pollinator areas”). Specific parks can be deemed Bee-Safe by not spraying chemicals and providing a diversity of plants for pollinators. Since we are already consciously using few chemicals, this can be done without any changes to current maintenance policies, procedures and protocol.

By declaring the City of St. Louis Park as Bee-Safe, the City would be actively supporting and providing pollinator areas and opportunities throughout our park system and City-owned properties (open space and random lots) and educating the public on the benefits of providing such areas. After this initial report was presented, the Bee-Safe resolution was reviewed and commented upon by interested local parties, the Environmental and Sustainability Commission and the local citizen group Humming for Bees. With input from all parties, the earlier proposed resolution has been modified.

FINANCIAL OR BUDGET CONSIDERATION: Any costs associated with declaring the City Bee Friendly are negligible.

VISION CONSIDERATION: St. Louis Park is committed to being a leader in environmental stewardship. We will increase environmental consciousness and responsibility in all areas of city business.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: Discussion
Proposed Bee-Safe Parks
Resolution

Prepared by: Jim Vaughan, Environmental Coordinator
Reviewed by: Cindy Walsh, Director of Operations and Recreation

Approved by:

DISCUSSION

BACKGROUND: Pesticides, namely insecticides, have traditionally been applied onto plants and crops. This has allowed for the insecticides to weather and wash away. Neonicotinoid pesticides are a new class of systematic insecticides chemically related to nicotine. The name literally means “new nicotine-like insecticides”. Neonicotinoids are also used in turf to help control a number of insect pests, most importantly grubs. They work by "dissolving" into the irrigation water or rain, which is then taken up by the plant and becomes part of the leaf and root tissue. This ensures that any insect munching on the tissues of the grass gets a lethal dose, and the lawn stays green.

Bee advocates argue that Neonicotinoids are responsible for honey bee (and other bees) Colony Collapse Disorder. CCD is an event where large populations of the bee colony, particularly the worker bees, disappear or die off. Without the worker bees, the queen and brood will eventually exhaust the honey reserve and kill off the remaining bees.

Experts in this area believe the decline in bees is due to a number of interacting factors, including reduction in stable food sources, introduction of bee diseases and parasites, and the rampant use of systemic (system-wide) insecticides. We can make efforts to change some of these factors in hope of increasing bee populations.

PRESENT CONSIDERATIONS: Currently the City of St. Louis Park contracts with Phillip's Tree Care, LLC. for any herbicide (pesticide) treatments. Philip's Tree Care, LLC uses Glyphosate and Millennium herbicides, not neonicotinoids. The chemicals used by Phillip's are not insecticides and have been determined safe for public use by the EPA.

The City's Park Maintenance division has been using Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices for over 15 years related to grass and turf, only chemically treating (currently via Phillip's Tree Care, LLC) selected high-use park turf areas, such as ball fields and high use parks (i.e. Oak Hill) to reduce the wear and tear on the turf. A majority of mowed areas in City park system are left untreated and retain and provide large areas of dandelion and white clover growths which are ideal early spring plants for pollinators (considered “pollinator areas”). Specific (and many if so desired) parks can easily be deemed Bee-Friendly (no spraying of chemicals and providing a diversity of plants for pollinators) without any changes to current maintenance policies, procedures and protocol.

The City currently has and continues to create numerous raingardens, prairie areas, wildflower buffer strips (along lakes and wooded areas), perennial gardens and many residential native landscapes. The City has also been successful in purchasing plants and trees that have not been treated with Neonicotinoids for landscape needs. These purchased plants and trees are put into perennial gardens, wildflower areas, buffer strips, raingardens, boulevards and other landscapes.

NEXT STEPS: Adopt a Bee-Safe City Resolution, similar to one recently adopted in Shorewood, Minnesota. The Bee-Safe City Resolution contains the following:

1. Turn public spaces into featured Bee-Safe areas (proposed parks are Browndale, Fern Hill, Lamplighter, Minikahda Vista, Shelard, Twin Lakes, Westwood Hills Nature Center, and Bass Lake Preserve).

2. Plant neonicotinoid-free (and other systemic insecticides-free as feasible) seeds, shrubs, flowers and trees.
3. No insecticide spraying of the Bee Food (pollinator plants) -not on it, not near it.
4. Continue pursuing Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices in all City parks.
5. Educate all citizens of St. Louis Park about bees: their gifts and needs.
6. Begin to implement this resolution in spring of 2015.

RESOLUTION NO. 15-_____

**A RESOLUTION ENDORSING "BEE-SAFE"
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

WHEREAS, bees and other pollinators are integral to a wide diversity of essential foods including fruit, nuts, and vegetables; and

WHEREAS bees and other pollinators are threatened due to habitat loss and pesticide use; and native bees and honey bees are also threatened due to pathogens and parasites; and

WHEREAS pollinators need to eat throughout the growing season, early spring through fall; and

WHEREAS, recent research suggests that there is a link between pesticides that contain neonicotinoids and the die-off of plant pollinators, including honeybees, native bees, butterflies, moths, and other insects; and

WHEREAS, neonicotinoids are synthetic chemical insecticides that are similar in structure and action to nicotine, a naturally occurring plant compound; and

WHEREAS, the City of St. Louis Park is committed to Hennepin County's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program, which considers the use of pesticides as a last resort, while the potential for the use of biological controls such as parasitoids and microbes could be a safer option; and

WHEREAS, the Precautionary Principle states that in environmental matters, the theory that if the effects of a product or action are unknown, then the product should not be used and the action should not be taken.

WHEREAS although Americans' annual expenditures on lawn and garden products ranks third highest in how we spend our money, most Americans lack knowledge of the toxic consequences of their purchases; and

WHEREAS, citizens need current, science-based information regarding environmentally sound garden and pest practices so that they can make informed decisions, and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds it is in the public interest and consistent with the City's Vision of Environmental Stewardship for the City to demonstrate its commitment to a safe and healthy community environment through the implementation of best management practices in the maintenance of the city parks, open spaces and city property.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota, that:

1. The City shall undertake its best efforts to become a Bee-Safe City based upon the Precautionary Principle.

2. The City shall adhere to Hennepin County's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program parameters, emphasizing biological controls over pesticides.

3. The City shall refrain from the use of systemic neonicotinoid pesticides on St. Louis Park City property.

4. The City shall undertake its best efforts to prescribe and use systemic neonicotinoid-free plants, seeds, and products favorable to bees and other pollinators in the City's public spaces.

5. The City shall designate Bee-Safe areas (Browndale, Fern Hill, Lamplighter, Minikahda Vista, Shelard, Twin Lakes Parks, Westwood Hills Nature Center, and Bass Lake Preserve) which feature City plantings that are free from systemic pesticides including neonicotinoids.

6. The City shall undertake best efforts to communicate to St. Louis Park residents the importance of creating and maintaining a pollinator-friendly habitat.

Reviewed for Administration:

Adopted by the City Council March 16, 2015

City Manager

Mayor

Attest:

City Clerk