



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara hosts 'Honeybees & Native Pollinators' Roundtable in Albany ~ Cornell University experts, others discuss strategies for protecting the state's honeybee and native pollinator populations ~ Read and watch more

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 24, 2016

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Albany, N.Y., May 24—On Tuesday, State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats), chairman of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee, hosted a "Honeybees & Native Pollinators" Roundtable, featuring experts from the **Cornell University College of Agriculture**

and Life Sciences (CALs), on strategies to protect the state's honeybee and native pollinator populations.

The "Honeybees & Native Pollinators" Roundtable offered beekeepers, researchers, government officials and farm, environmental and agricultural business groups the opportunity to highlight points for inclusion in the development of a New York State Pollinator Protection Plan.

Today's roundtable was held in Room 711A of the Legislative Office Building in Albany.

O'Mara said that he hopes the event will assist and spur action on the ongoing development and implementation of New York's Pollinator Protection Plan. In April 2015, Governor Andrew Cuomo established an interagency task force, led by the state departments of Agriculture and Markets (Ag and Markets) and Environmental Conservation (DEC), to begin producing the plan as well as examine other issues critical to the sustained well-being of the state's pollinator populations. The 2016-17 state budget includes \$500,000 through the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) for the plan's implementation.

O'Mara, who also serves on the Senate Agriculture Committee, said, "The oversight, protection and recovery of native and managed honeybee and other native pollinator populations are critically important to the future strength and resiliency of so many of our farmers and producers, as well as to the agricultural industry overall in New York and states across the nation. I'm hopeful that this discussion with key stakeholders will assist the state's ongoing leadership and facilitate action in developing an effective and successful Pollinator Protection Plan and other health strategies. It's a critical agricultural, environmental and economic challenge."

Julie Suarez, Assistant Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, said, “The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University is always pleased to partner with key policy makers and stakeholders on issues of importance to New York’s farm and food community. With over 450 species of bee pollinators in New York State, everyone who enjoys eating local, fresh fruits and vegetables relies on these busy insects. The world-class entomologists at CALS are working to understand and solve the key challenges causing declines in pollinator populations in New York.”

[Watch Senator O'Mara's opening remarks at today's Roundtable [HERE](#)]

In addition to CALS researchers and scientists, participants at today's Roundtable included representatives of the governor’s office, and the state Departments of Agriculture and Markets (Ag and Markets) and Environmental Conservation (DEC); regional beekeepers and beekeeper associations, including the Southern Adirondack Beekeepers and Rulison Honey Farms LLC (Amsterdam); New York Farm Bureau; The Nature Conservancy of New York; National Resources Defense Council; and Citizens Campaign for the Environment.

The state’s agricultural industry is heavily dependent upon the health of honeybees, in particular, which annually pollinate nearly half a billion dollars’ worth of farm crops. Additionally, during the state’s colder months, New York’s migratory beekeepers travel around the country to help pollinate crops that grow in year-round climates.