



United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

MISSISSIPPI

June 2021

CONSERVATION BYTES



Kurt Readus, State Conservationist

A Message From The State Conservationist

Summer is in full effect in Mississippi! As we move throughout these upcoming months, we must be prepared for this season. From obligating funds, to safely meeting with farmers, let us continue putting our best foot forward in everything we do.

Our hard work and dedication throughout the year has gotten us this far and will keep us going! As we embark on this journey, remember to take care of yourselves. The summer months can seem too long and hot, and with the virus still in our everyday lives, let us make sure that we are doing the very best we can to stay hydrated and safe!

As we all know, June is recognized as Pride Month. Here in Mississippi NRCS, we want everyone to know that we stand as an ally to those in the LGBTQ+ community within our agency and across the state of Mississippi.

Have a safe and productive rest of June!

Kurt Readus, State Conservationist

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kurt Readus". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

ABOUT NRCS

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service collaborates with farmers, ranchers, communities and other landowners to help protect natural resources on private lands. We work side-by-side with landowners to identify and address natural resource concerns, such as the quality of water and soil and the amount of habitat for precious wildlife.

Find your local service center for more on how NRCS can help you.



Feature Story Highlight

Pollinators Matter. Bee Appreciative. Bee the Solution.

By Jocelyn Benjamin, USDA Public Affairs Specialist



A bee-less future would sting us all. The decline of bees and other pollinator populations threatens our global food security and here's why.

Pollinators contribute to ecosystem health and a sustainable food supply. Honeybees, native bees, birds, bats, butterflies, and other animals are all required for more than 80% of the world's flowering plants to reproduce. This includes food crops.

Who's in a better position to benefit from safeguarding pollinators than agricultural producers, forest landowners and beekeepers?

Caring for pollinators also helps protect our ability to grow food and producers' bottom lines while ensuring the marketability of other agricultural goods throughout the nation.

June 21-27 is National Pollinator Week, but it's certainly going to take more than a week to show our gratitude to these priceless creatures.

No single issue can be blamed for the pollinator decline. But here are five tips you can include in your daily land management as part of the solution.

1. Diversify and beautify your land: Offer your land as an oasis for pollinators by planting a diverse mix of flowering plants that sustain and enhance pollinators. This way, you can assist the production of healthy fruits and vegetables to improve your bottom line.

2. Protect nesting sites: Protect flowering plants and potential pollinator nesting sites, such as areas of undisturbed ground and native vegetation.

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MISSISSIPPI USDA NRCS LEADERSHIP

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- 3. Carefully use chemicals:** Pollinators can be sensitive to chemicals. So, try a natural, pollinator-friendly alternative on your land. Or when using pesticides, herbicides, or insecticides, please do so carefully.
- 4. Support Bee Better Certified producers:** Become a [Bee Better Certified](#) producer or buy produce from farms that support bees. Products that are Bee Better Certified are grown on farms that use pollinator-friendly conservation practices.
- 5. Buzz on:** Spread the word about these tips and the conservation programs available to help you and your neighbors implement pollinator-friendly practices on your land.

And before you take that third bite of food a pollinator has gifted you, see how the conservation resources offered by the [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#) can help you implement those tips on your land.

USDA works closely with agricultural producers and forest landowners to help increase pollinator habitat in targeted areas.

USDA offers conservation programs that provide financial incentives and technical assistance to farmers and forest landowners through the [Natural Resources Conservation Service \(NRCS\)](#).

NRCS programs like the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#) help improve pollinator habitat and their food sources by assisting with planting cover crops, wildflowers, and native plants in buffers and areas not in production.

USDA's [Farm Service Agency \(FSA\)](#) also helps producers enhance pollinator habitat on their land through the [Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\)](#). Producers and forest landowners voluntarily convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive land to permanent vegetative cover like perennial grasslands, which are full of native forbs and legumes that are critical to the health of honeybees and wild pollinators.

FSA also supports livestock, honeybee, and farm-raised fish producers with emergency assistance through its [Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish \(ELAP\)](#) program. ELAP provides financial assistance to producers who are experiencing honeybee losses from their hives for honey production, pollination or honeybee breeding. For more information about pollinators and what you can do to help, please contact your local [USDA service center](#).

Jocelyn Benjamin is a Public Affairs Specialist with the FPAC Business Center

Cindy Ayers And Her Honey Bee's

Pictures and Story Written by Luis Montgomery, Public Affairs Specialist Intern

USDA offers conservation programs that provide financial incentives and technical assistance to farmers and forest landowners through USDA's Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) mission area agencies. Programs from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is helping improve pollinator habitat and their food sources by assisting with planting cover crops, wildflowers, and native plants in buffers and areas not in production.

Cindy Ayers, owner of Footprint Farms, shared, "Since the implementation of the nearly 10,000 bees on our farm, we have seen a significant improvement of our produce." She continued, "We believe that the bees are benefiting from the crops just as much as the crops are benefiting from the bees."

Honeybees, and other pollinators, are all required for more than 80% of the world's flowering plants to reproduce. While the population of all species has declined over the last few decades, the dramatic drop in the population of bees has increasingly been of concern because of the important role they play as pollinators.

Regardless of which species are endangered, there are practices people both in and out of the agricultural industry can do to help preserve the much-needed pollinators.

Producers must continue to use good bee-safe management tools and beekeepers need to control the pest infestations in their hives. For at-home practices, you can plant plants that grow natively in your region and attract many species of bees, monarch butterflies, and other pollinators.

For more information on NRCS' EQIP program, please visit our [website](#).



NRCS Partners With Piney Woods School



Mississippi NRCS employees, led by Area 2 Conservationist Jamie Keith, met with Piney Woods students monthly throughout the school year to educate them on the work NRCS and its partners do for farmers, ranchers, landowners, and agriculture overall for the state of Mississippi. Watch the [video here](#).

Pollinator Week Video



June 21-27 is National Pollinator Week! Enjoy a quick video made by our Public Affairs team on one of the most important parts of agriculture [here](#).

What Are Pronouns?

Writing by Lesle Peavie, LGBTQ+ Special Emphasis Manager

Pronouns are used in place of a proper noun (like someone's name). We use pronouns most often when referring to someone without using their name.

Example: Have you heard from Tom? He hasn't texted me back all day. *He is the pronoun.*

So Why Does It Matter for Us and the LGBTQ+ Community?

In English, we primarily use pronouns (he/she), which refer to a person's gender. For queer, gender non-conforming, non-binary, and transgender people, these pronouns may not fit, create discomfort, and cause stress and anxiety.

A recent study indicates that in transgender youth, using correct pronouns and names reduces depression and suicide risks.

Having trouble understanding why this would upset someone? Think about your pronoun (it's probably "he" or "she"). Now imagine someone calling you the one you don't think of yourself as. Imagine them doing it over and over and over, even after you've corrected them.

Visit [Lgbtlifecenter.org/pronouns](https://lgbtlifecenter.org/pronouns) for more information.

So Question, What are Your Pronouns????

FEEDBACK

Conservation Bytes is a newsletter produced by the NRCS Mississippi State Office. Please send us your questions, comments, or ideas to

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