



# Wild Blueberry Commission

## OF MAINE

5784 York Complex, Suite 52, Orono, Maine 04469-5784

TEL: 207-581-1475

FAX: 207-581-3499

May 5, 2020

Tony Jenkins  
USDA NRCS Maine State Office  
Bangor, Maine 04401

Dear Mr. Tony Jenkins,

Thank you to you and your staff for supporting agriculture during this challenging time. We are aware and appreciate the risk that you take in continuing to service Maine's farmers, and forest owners amidst a global pandemic.

I'm writing to ask that you consider making the practice, Integrated Pest Management (595), a priority in 2021. In particular, we are interested in the new practice, Integrated Pest and Pollinator Management, that was designed exclusively for wild blueberry growers. This practice presents a great opportunity for growers to carry out pest control operations in alignment with NRCS conservation priorities, reducing **plant pest pressure** and conserving **terrestrial habitat for wildlife and invertebrates**, especially pollinators, but will require additional incentive to transform it from a new underutilized practice to one that moves the NRCS conservation needle across tens of thousands of acres of wild blueberry land.

Especially for small farms considering this practice, the current cost-share rate of \$66.58 per acre, when applied across, e.g., a 10-acre farm, is not high enough to incentivize the conservation work.

We request funding this opportunity at the 90% priority rate.

This practice addresses a terrestrial habitat for invertebrates resource concern, and reduces plant pest pressure—helping to reduce the risks to pollinators in particular. Pollinators are one of the keystone players in Maine's wild blueberry industry. Their health and continued pollination services are of the utmost important to us. Considering the declines of many species of bumble bees, the endangered species listing of the rusty patched bumble bee, and the importance of these insects to many sectors of Maine's agricultural economy, we ask that you prioritize this resource concern and fund this opportunity at the highest rate.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Eric Venturini  
Executive Director  
(207) 478-7612

CC: Roy Allen, Chair of the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine