

**A Report to the Maryland General
Assembly**

Regarding

Pollinator Habitat Plan
(Transportation Article § HB 132, Ch. 614, 2016)

Maryland Department of Transportation
State Highway Administration

MSAR 10840

January 1, 2018

Introduction

This report is prepared in accordance with House Bill 132, Chapter 614 (HB 132, Ch. 614) 2016, Maryland Annotated Code, which directs:

“On or before January 1, 2018, SHA shall report to the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee and the House Environment and Transportation Committee, in accordance with § 2–1246 of the State Government Article, on the pollinator habitat plans established in accordance with § 2–1701 of the Agriculture Article, as enacted by Section 1 of this Act.”

The report below provides information on the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration’s (MDOT SHA) Pollinator Habitat Plan.

Background

House Bill 132 was signed into law on May 19, 2016, and became effective on July 1, 2016. The purpose of the legislation is to require the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Maryland Environmental Service (MES), and the MDOT SHA to consult with the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) to each establish a pollinator habitat plan by July 1, 2017. The pollinator habitat plan established under HB 132 must include best management practices for maintaining pollinator habitats, must adhere to MDA’s pollinator protection plan, may not require an action that is inconsistent with any federal, State, or local requirement, and may not require the creation of a pollinator habitat on productive farmland.

Analysis

In September of 2017, a team from MDOT SHA Office of Environmental Design (OED) made preliminary field visits to roadside rest areas. Specific locations at the rest areas were assessed for possible designation as pollinator habitat.

In October of 2017, representatives of MDOT SHA OED met with representatives of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to discuss partnering opportunities in development of educational materials to inform the public of MDOT SHA’s efforts on behalf of pollinators.

Additionally, MDOT SHA has sponsored research being conducted by the University of Maryland, Department of Entomology, Van Engeldorp Bee lab. The research is titled “Evaluating Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management Techniques to Improve Pollinator Habitat.” Results from this research will be used in the maintenance, creation, enhancement, and restoration of pollinator habitat.

MDOT SHA Pollinator Habitat Plan

As required by Agriculture Article §2-1801(b)(1) HB 132/Ch.614, 2016, and HB 830, 2017, the plan was developed after consultation with key stakeholders and was made available on the MDOT SHA website, prior to the September 1, 2017 deadline. It reads as follows:

MDOT SHA POLLINATOR HABITAT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The Pollinator Habitat Plan of the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) was developed in response to the 2016 Pollinator Protection Act of the Maryland General Assembly, § 2-1801 Pollinator Habitat Plan, the 2017 amendments to the Act, and in consultation with the Maryland Department of Agriculture's Pollinator Protection Plan.

IMPORTANCE OF POLLINATORS

MDOT SHA recognizes that pollinators are essential to our well-being, and that they are an important part of healthy ecosystems. An estimated 85% of the world's flowering plants depend on animal pollinators for their pollination and successful fruit development. These crops produce our fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds and livestock forage.

Wild pollinators, including bees, wasps, flies, beetles, butterflies, moths, and hummingbirds, as well as managed hives of honey bees, are experiencing declines due to a loss of habitat, the spread of disease, and various other factors. MDOT SHA Pollinator Plan creates pollinator habitat areas planted with native nectar and pollinator-friendly plant species within selected rest areas and MDOT SHA office facilities.

DESIGNATED SITES

MDOT SHA is in the process of evaluating suitable locations and seeking funding to create designated pollinator habitat areas. MDOT SHA will commit to creating designated sites with a focus on managing habitat to support pollinators at various MDOT SHA facilities across the State.

MANAGEMENT

Vegetation at MDOT SHA Pollinator Habitat Plan sites will be managed through a variety of activities.

MDOT SHA Pollinator Habitat Plan designated sites will be managed to provide attractive and diverse plantings that support pollinator habitat.

MDOT SHA will maintain vegetation in conformance with applicable laws and as needed to support adjacent activities.

No pesticides containing neonicotinoids or labeled as toxic to bees, nor seeds or plants treated with neonicotinoids will be used at MDOT SHA designated Pollinator Habitat Plan sites.

GOAL

The goal of the MDOT SHA Pollinator Habitat Plan is to enhance habitat areas for bees, butterflies and other threatened and dwindling pollinators by:

- 1. Providing seasonal flowers that provide nectar, pollen and nesting sites for pollinators.*
- 2. Providing refuge areas with plants and seeds not treated with neonicotinoid pesticides.*
- 3. Providing educational signage about pollinators and their habitat.*

Conclusion

Protecting habitats for all pollinators on MDOT SHA rights-of-way through these established best practices remains a priority. Implementation of the MDOT SHA's Pollinator Habitat Plan in accordance with HB 132 of 2016 and subsequent amendments codified through HB 830, Chapter 755 Acts 2017 is underway.

The plan is available to for the public to view on the MDOT SHA website at:
<http://roads.maryland.gov/Index.aspx?PageId=344>.