

New York Beekeepers Receive USDA Grant

A federal grant awarded to the Empire State Honey Producers Association (eshpa.org) will help New York beekeepers to stop the loss of honey bee colonies in the State.

The 3 year, \$59,000 grant will train beekeepers to not only prevent, diagnose, and treat honeybee maladies, but give them the tools to teach other, beginning beekeepers to recognize bee diseases.

The honey bee has been in the national spotlight following large scale unexplained losses of numbers. The silver lining in this cloud has been a renewed interest in beekeeping. Like any other specialized activity, beekeeping has a steep learning curve and may not yield immediate returns.

Dennis VanEnglesdorp, Senior Extension Associate at Penn State, is enthusiastic about the potential of the USDA funding: “It doesn't matter if you keep 2 or 100's of hives – keeping bees is one of the most relaxing and fascinating occupations.” The Project Director of the Bee Informed Partnership (beeinformed.org), an extension project that endeavors to decrease the number of managed honey bee colonies that die over the winter, adds, “Unfortunately keeping bees alive isn't that easy, and it seems to be getting harder all the time. Projects like this one are exactly what we need to help keep colonies alive and so ensure we have the pollinators needed to pollinate our gardens and orchards.”

The directors of the grant, Pat Bono of Rochester, and Peter Borst of Ithaca, in conjunction with the Empire State Honey Producers (which will provide matching funds), will implement a bold, new concept for NY beekeepers by partnering with many regional beekeeping groups throughout New York State. Workshops will be held at several locations across the State.

Among the many goals of the program, Bono and Borst include the retention of beginning beekeepers, as there is an increase in the number of new beekeepers, especially by women. With successful beekeeping, these beginning beekeepers would be less apt to quit the profession, and will help attract, encourage and encourage new beekeepers, who constitute the next generation of pollinators and honey producers. A successful program in New York State will also serve as a model and example for other states in the New England and snow belt region.

The grant is administered by the USDA-NIFA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, which provides funding to support training, education, outreach, and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers or ranchers.

Honey bees pollinate about \$300 million in value of New York State crops, such as apples, berries, squash, pumpkins, and grapes.

"This grant will allow beekeepers, to learn and identify honeybee disease. The knowledge that the trainers acquire will continue to benefit NY beekeepers for many years", Greg Kalicin, President of the Empire State Honey Producers Association ([eshpa](http://eshpa.org)).

The Empire State Honey Producers Association, the state beekeeping organization of New York, welcomes new members, and presents informational and educational programs twice a year. The group has been promoting the interests of New York beekeepers since 1868.