May 20, 2020
To: Minnesota Honey Producers Association
From: Judy Erickson, Joe Birkholz
RE: End of 2020 Session Legislative Update

CONSERVATION
S T R A T E G I E S

End of Session
The Minnesota Legislature quietly adjourned in the early hours of May 18th with a number of big-ticket items, including a bonding bill, tax bill, COVID19 relief, the environment and LCCMR bill remaining unfinished. Despite a flurry of negotiations in the closing hours, they were unable to reach agreement. This session, dubbed by House Speaker Melissa Hortman (DFL-Brooklyn Park) as the "pandemic session" was anything but conventional due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and the ensuing measures enacted by Governor Tim Walz with his peacetime emergency powers to slow the spread of the virus. All normal legislative processes, procedures, and transparency fell by the wayside.

A great summary on the 2020 session can be found here.

LCCMR
- Procedurally, this year's LCCMR bill was added to the larger Environment and Natural Resources Omnibus Bill. Normally, it is passed as a standalone bill but that was not the case this year.
- In the Senate, Senator Bill Ingebrigtsen (R-Alexandria) added the LCCMR bill to the Environment and Natural Resources Omnibus Bill, [SF 4499](SF 4499). Included in his bill was language granting extensions to previous LCCMR grants set to expire June 30, 2020. The bill also included a number of pollinator projects that MHPA supports:
    - Improving Pollinator Conservation by Revealing Habitat Needs: Colleen Satyshur, U of MN
    - Bee Minnesota - Protect our Native Bumblebees: Declan Schroeder, U of MN
    - Tools for Supporting Healthy Ecosystems and Pollinators: Jessica Peterson, MN DNR
    - Pollinator & Beneficial Insect Strategic Habitat Program: Dan Shaw, BWSR
- In the House, Representative Rick Hansen (DFL-St. Paul) the LCCMR language was in the Environment and Natural Resources Omnibus Bill, [HF 4554](HF 4554). It had similar language relating to LCCMR grant extensions. In addition to the programs listed above, HF 4554 has one more pollinator project included:
    - Lawns to Legumes: Dan Shaw, BWSR.
- These bills had drastic differences that were not worked out between the House and Senate. Not only differences on LCCMR priorities, but also separate policy differences. While they passed their respective chambers in the last two days of session, their differences were too great to be worked out in time for session to end.
- Additionally, there was another grant extension bill heard in both the House and Senate. [HF 4500](HF 4500) would have granted a 2-year extension for all grants scheduled to be canceled on June 30. The bill did not become law.
- During the earlier part of session pre-COVID-19, there were another number of pollinator issues that we were supporting and monitoring, including state funded CRP incentives. With the pandemic and the new working conditions of the Legislature, these issues fell by the wayside.

The Road from Here

A special session is expected beginning June 12. Governor Walz's peacetime emergency is set to expire on June 12th, and when it is extended the Legislature will be required to be called back in. Between now and then, work is expected to continue on a bonding bill, tax bill, environment and LCCMR bill, and other COVID relief measures. The May 20th announcement of the new openings and changes for June 1st, has created additional conflict with the GOP. The GOP wants to move forward more quickly on all fronts, including churches, than the Governor. This is another potential wedge in finishing key work left undone.

Also ahead is the next round of project funding from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources. This has become a major source of funding for pollinator habitat research and projects. We will review the proposals when they become available for public review and advise advocating for inclusion of these projects in the new package.

We will continue to monitor and remain engaged in this activity, and will provide updates to the board.