

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary,
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250-1300

Ms. Cindy Smith
Administrator,
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
4700 River Road
Riverdale, MD 20737-1234

Ms. Rebecca Bech
Deputy Administrator,
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Plant Protection and Quarantine
1400 Independence Ave., S.W., Room 302E
Washington, DC 20250

Cc: Kevin Shea, Alan Green, Robyn Rose, Wayne Wehling, Colin Stewart

February 10, 2010

Dear Secretary Vilsack, Administrator Smith, and Deputy Administrator Bech:

The undersigned scientists respectfully request that the USDA-APHIS take action to regulate the movement and health of commercial bumble bees in order to safeguard wild, native bumble bee pollinators.

Native bumble bee pollinators are important to the reproduction of agriculturally significant and native flowering plants. At least four species of formerly common North American bumble bees have experienced declines; two of those species – the rusty patched bumble bee (*Bombus affinis*) and Franklin's bumble bee (*Bombus franklini*) may be on the brink of extinction. Major threats to the survival of these wild bee pollinators include the potential for spread of disease from commercially produced bees that are transported throughout the country,¹ competition with locally native species, and hybridization with locally native species.

In order to prevent the spread of disease to wild populations of agriculturally significant bee pollinators, the following scientists respectfully request that APHIS use its regulatory authority, outlined in a petition submitted on January 12, 2010 by The Xerces Society, Natural Resources Defense Council, Defenders of Wildlife, and Dr. Robbin Thorp, to regulate the interstate movement and health of commercial bumble bees. Specifically, the signatories of this letter request that APHIS create rules prohibiting the movement of bumble bees outside of their native ranges and regulate interstate movement of bumble

¹ National Research Council of the National Academies, [Status of Pollinators in North America](#), (2007).

bee pollinators within their native ranges by requiring permits that show that bumble bees are certified as disease-free prior to movement.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

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Author of *Bumblebees: Their Behaviour, Ecology and Conservation*

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