

MIRS CAPITOL CAPSULE January 21, 2015

Despite Bee Buzz, Sting Of GAAMPs Not As Sharp This Year

Previously, it was backyard chickens. This year, it's beekeeping.

Updated state guidelines on how to keep bees are drawing some scrutiny at the Agricultural Commission level from the Michigan Small Farm Council (MSFC) and the Michigan Beekeepers Association (MBA), among others.

But the Agriculture and Rural Development Commission today agreed to changes suggested by the MSFC and MBA, so the buzz created last year during debate on the state's guidelines on agriculture practices or Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs) -- won't be as loud as last year's.

Janice **SWANSON**, who chaired the task force in charge of updating the Care of Animals GAAMPs, told the commission today changes were made to the beekeeping guidelines to address issues with beekeeping on small and irregularly-shaped lots.

Public comments on the GAAMPs streamed into the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), including several from people who keep bees in residential areas, saying the changes appeared too restrictive for them.

For hives on small lots or at locations within 200 feet of any developed property, the original language called for "a solid fence, wall, or dense vegetative barrier capable of interrupting the direct flight of bees" so they didn't fly into neighboring property.

That fence was supposed to be six feet tall and has to extend beyond the direct line of sight from the hive to the neighboring or adjacent property, according to the original proposed language.

Wendy **BANKA**, executive director of the MSFC, said the change in the language seemed to imply a six-foot fence had to be built around the beekeeper's entire property.

Swanson assured her that was not the intent. Either way, the commission agreed to clarify the intent in the language when it adopted the new GAAMPs. The intent was to create a barrier just in front of the hive entrance to stop bees from flying directly into a neighbor's yard.

The MBA, which said it was largely in support of the changes, also won a language amendment adopted by the commission. The other GAAMPs, which had minimal changes, were passed as presented.

Although there were 81 pages of public comments submitted to MDARD, this was by no means the firestorm from last year, when changes to the Site Selection GAAMPs drew outrage from the urban farming community (See "[Limited Livestock In Residential Areas Approved By Ag Commission](#)," 4/28/14).

Despite concerns the new language would hamper farming in residential and urban areas, MDARD has said the site reviews it has conducted haven't resulted in mass upheaval (See "[MDARD Seeks Fee Hikes, Continued Environmental Funding In 2015](#)," 1/6/15).

In other action taken by the Ag Commission today:

Nursery Inspection Fee Hikes: The commission approved another round of fee hikes for nursery grower inspections. The new rate will increase by \$1 an acre, to \$53 for the first acre and \$32 for each subsequent acre. Christmas tree inspections will increase \$1 per hour, from \$57 per hour to \$58 an hour.

MDARD Director Jamie **CLOVER ADAMS** said the deal with the industry was to adjust the fees annually based on changes to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The fees were previously increased November 2013 (See "[Ag Commission Hikes Inspection Fees For Nurseries](#)," 11/8/13).

Invasive Species Order: The commission approved an invasive species order listing water soldier plants as a prohibited species in Michigan.

This was the Ag Commission's contribution to the state's work to put several "least wanted" species on its prohibited list as part of a Council of Great Lakes Governors initiative (See "[State To Add 'Killer Shrimp,' Seven Other Species To Prohibited List](#)," 11/6/14).

Mike **BRYAN**, a nursery and export specialist with MDARD, said it was a "historical day" because this was the first time the Ag Commission approved an invasive species order.

New Commission Officers: In other news from the Ag Commission, Trever **MEACHUM**, first appointed by Gov. Rick **SNYDER** in 2012, was named chair. He was previously vice chair.

The new vice chair is Fred **WALCOTT**, who was previously secretary and first appointed by Snyder in 2013.

The new secretary is Dru **MONTRI**, who was appointed by Snyder in 2014.

In photo below, from left: Montri, Walcott, Meachum.
<image001.jpg>