Date of Hearing: April 15, 2021

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
Robert Rivas, Chair
AB 391 (Villapudua) – As Introduced February 2, 2021

SUBJECT: Pollinator habitat conservation: funding

SUMMARY: This bill appropriates $5,000,000 from the General Fund to the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). The funds will increase technical assistance (TA), outreach, and provide grants to incentivize participation in state and federal conservation programs where pollinator habitat and forage are established. Specifically, *this bill*:

1) Makes legislative declaration and findings: 1) Working lands offer an opportunity to expand habitat and forage for pollinators which will help sequester carbon and contribute to climate risk reduction, and 2) In order to engage growers in delivering solutions that benefit pollinators, funding is needed for activities that accelerate the adoption of conservation practices that integrate pollinator habitat and forage on working lands.

2) Makes a onetime appropriation of $5 million to CDFA for TA, outreach, and provide grants to incentivize participation in state and federal conservation programs where pollinator habitat and forage are established.

3) Requires CDFA to work with the University of California Extension Services (UC Extension), California Resource Conservation Districts (RCD), and the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRC) to increase pollinator habitats programs.

EXISTING LAW: Authorizes CDFA to expend in accordance with law all money that is made available for its use.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: Pollination occurs when pollen is moved within flowers or carried from flower to flower by pollinating animals such as birds, bees, bats, butterflies, moths, beetles, or other animals, or by the wind. The transfer of pollen in and between flowers of the same species leads to fertilization, and successful seed and fruit production for plants. Pollination ensures that a plant will produce full-bodied fruit and a full set of viable seeds.

Pollination is an important regulating ecosystem service provided by various insects, bats and also several managed pollinator species e.g. the European honey bee. Many of the pollinator-dependent crops rely on pollination services by the European honeybee. However, wild pollinator species (e.g. wild bee species and hover flies) are known to be effective pollinators, too, that may also forage under more inclement weather conditions than the honeybee.

There is growing concern about the decline in pollinators. Bees, as the best documented species, can be seen to be suffering from chronic exposure to a range of stressors, which include: a loss of abundance and diversity of flowers, a decline in suitable habitat for them to build nests; exposure to pesticides and infection by parasites and pathogens, many inadvertently spread by the actions

of humans. It is likely that climate change may impact further on particular pollinators, for example bumble bees, which are cool-climate specialists.

According to the author, numerous states, federal, agricultural, and conservation organizations have identified the opportunity and developed resources to expand pollinator habitat and forage on farms and ranches. Scaling these individual efforts requires bringing together critical elements of public and private investment. Furthermore, in line with the Governor's Executive Order N-82-20 to conserve 30% of habitats by 2030 to support biodiversity and boost climate resilience, the state has an incentive to partner with farmers and ranchers to leverage California's working lands in this effort while retaining the economic prosperity of the nation's leading agricultural economy.

Supporter's state working lands offer an unprecedented opportunity to expand habitat and forage for pollinators. To better engage growers in delivering solutions that benefit pollinators, state investment through this bill is critical to accelerate adoption, imbedding pollinator practices within California's working landscapes.

Organization with a support if amended position stated, "*Many of California's native pollinators rely upon native plant species for their continued existence. Research has shown that native bee species vastly prefer native plant species over non-native species. Since Governor Newsom has declared that it is the policy of the state to protect biodiversity (see Executive Order N-82-80), we believe that state investments in generating pollinator habitat should be directed towards protecting and restoring native biodiversity, including native pollinators. For these reasons, we would like to see AB 391 amended to include language that would direct those receiving the funding to integrate pollinator habitat and forage on working lands, including to provide habitat for native plants and use locally appropriate native plant seed mixes when feasible*".

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Almond Alliance of California (Sponsor)
Agricultural Council of California
American Pistachio Growers
California Association of Pest Control Advisers
California Association of Winegrape Growers
California Chamber of Commerce
California Citrus Mutual
California Cotton Ginners & Growers Association
California Farm Bureau Federation
California Fresh Fruit Association
California Pear Grower Association
California Seed Association
California State Beekeepers Association
California Strawberry Commission
California Walnut Commission
General Mills, INC.
Grower-shipper Association of Central California
Pollinator Partnership

Project Apis M.
Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation
Western Growers Association
Western Plant Health Association

Support If Amended

California Native Plant Society
Defenders of Wildlife

Opposition

None on file.

Analysis Prepared by: Victor Francovich / AGRI. / (916) 319-2084