

Responsible Bee Stewardship in the Santa Ynez Valley

Scientific & Agricultural Support for Rural Pollinator Stewardship

Submitted to:

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

Submitted by:

Fred Razo
Santa Ynez Valley Resident
Retired Educator & Community Advocate

Pollinators Are Essential to Agriculture

Pollinators are foundational to modern agriculture and environmental sustainability.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA):

- approximately **35% of the world's food crops** depend upon animal pollinators,
- and roughly **one out of every three bites of food** consumed by humans exists because of pollination activity.

Honey bees and native pollinators directly support:

- fruit production,
- vineyards,
- orchards,
- vegetable crops,
- forage crops,
- seed production,
- biodiversity,
- and ecosystem stability.

Federal agricultural agencies estimate that pollinators contribute more than **\$34 billion annually** to U.S. agricultural productivity.

Importance to the Santa Ynez Valley

The Santa Ynez Valley is an agriculturally rich rural region known for:

- vineyards,
- orchards,
- olive production,
- specialty crops,
- native oak ecosystems,
- lavender and flowering plant cultivation,
- ranchlands,
- and small agricultural operations.

Healthy pollinator populations directly improve:

- crop yield,
- fruit set,
- seed production,
- plant vitality,
- and long-term agricultural resilience.

Pollinator presence also supports:

- native habitat health,
- watershed resilience,
- biodiversity,
- and environmental sustainability throughout rural landscapes.

Current Rural Restriction Deserves Review

Santa Barbara County currently applies highly restrictive rural apiary setback standards in unincorporated areas.

County guidance generally prohibits apiaries:

- within approximately 600 feet of neighboring dwellings,
- and within approximately 300 feet of roads and property lines without permission or special circumstances.

In practical application, these restrictions can make responsible beekeeping extremely difficult even on large rural parcels where homes are widely dispersed and responsible hive management is achievable.

At the same time, the City of Santa Barbara already permits regulated urban beekeeping under Municipal Code Chapter 6.28, including multiple hives on residential lots under operational stewardship standards and setbacks. (ecode360.com)

This comparison suggests the County should thoughtfully reexamine whether current rural standards appropriately reflect:

- agricultural realities,
 - modern stewardship practices,
 - parcel spacing,
 - and current scientific understanding of pollinator importance.
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Pollinator Decline Is a Real Agricultural Concern

Federal agencies and scientific researchers continue to warn about declining pollinator populations caused by:

- habitat loss,
- disease,
- pesticide exposure,
- climate stress,
- and reduced floral diversity.

USDA researchers describe honey bees as a “critical link” in American agricultural production.

Protecting and responsibly expanding pollinator stewardship capacity in rural agricultural communities is increasingly important for long-term food and ecosystem sustainability.

Responsible Stewardship Already Includes Oversight

California already regulates apiaries through:

- hive registration,
- county agricultural oversight,
- BeeWhere hive tracking systems,
- and pesticide notification programs.

These accountability systems already support responsible management and public safety.

This request is not for unregulated beekeeping.

It is a request for balanced, science-based rural stewardship policies that:

- protect neighboring property owners,
- support agriculture,
- encourage responsible apiary management,
- and strengthen pollinator sustainability throughout Santa Barbara County and the Santa Ynez Valley.

Respectfully for your consideration,



Fred Razo