



At a Glance

Why We Did This Project

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted this audit to determine how the EPA oversees states' Managed Pollinator Protection Plans (MP3s), which are designed to reduce pesticide exposure to pollinators through timely communication and coordination among key stakeholders. *Managed pollinators* are generally honey bees that beekeepers contract out to growers for their pollination services.

In June 2014, a presidential memorandum, *Creating a Federal Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators*, charged numerous federal agencies to address the factors contributing to pollinator decline. As part of this effort, the EPA has worked to encourage state pesticide agencies to develop state-specific MP3s with clearly defined scopes, including the species of managed pollinators addressed.

This report addresses the following:

- Ensuring the safety of chemicals.

Address inquiries to our public affairs office at (202) 566-2391 or OIG_WEBCOMMENTS@epa.gov.

List of [OIG reports](#).

EPA Needs to Determine Strategies and Level of Support for Overseeing State Managed Pollinator Protection Plans

What We Found

Under the authority of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), the EPA works to reduce unwanted pesticide exposure to both managed pollinators and native pollinators such as insects, birds and animals. The MP3 voluntary program encourages states to develop a plan as part of the EPA's overall national pollinator protection efforts. The EPA plays a supportive role in overseeing the development, implementation and measurement of state MP3s, as outlined in the agency's National Program Manager Guidance. The EPA does not review, approve or provide direct funding for the development or implementation of state MP3s.

We found that, as of January 2018, 45 states had developed or were developing MP3s. To provide guidance for MP3 development, the EPA worked with two state government groups: the Association of American Pesticide Control Officials (AAPCO) and an AAPCO committee called the State FIFRA Issues, Research and Evaluation Group (SFIREG). However, we found that the EPA does not have a means to evaluate the national impact of MP3s. As of May 2019, AAPCO/SFIREG, in consultation with the EPA, developed a survey to evaluate MP3s, which is expected to be distributed to state pesticide agencies in the fall of 2019. Despite these survey efforts and plans, the EPA had not developed a strategy to use the survey data to evaluate either the national impact of MP3s or the agency's support of state MP3 implementation efforts.

In addition, both nongovernmental organizations and states reported that the EPA focuses on acute risks—those that occur during a single exposure to a specific pesticide—to managed pollinators. Other areas of concern, such as chronic contact with pesticides and native pollinator protection activities, may not be receiving appropriate attention. The EPA needs to decide how it will measure, support and assist in the implementation of MP3s.

Recommendations and Agency Planned Corrective Actions

We made five recommendations to the Assistant Administrator for Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention, including determining whether the outcomes of states' MP3s are meeting the EPA's goals for the program and what support the EPA will provide to assist MP3 implementation efforts. The agency agreed with our recommendations and provided acceptable corrective actions.

Honey bee pollination adds more than \$15 billion in value to U.S. agricultural crops each year. However, the number of managed honey bee colonies in the United States has declined from 5.7 million colonies in the 1940s to 2.7 million colonies in 2015.