



Riverkeeper 2020 Legislative Memorandum

Support - A.7639/S.5816 (Englebright/Hoylman) - Support

An act to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to enacting the birds and bees protection act; and providing for the repeal of certain provisions upon expiration thereof

Riverkeeper strongly supports the passage of A.7639/S.5816, which places a five-year moratorium on outdoor uses of neurotoxic insecticides in New York. This bill will prohibit the use of certain active ingredients in pesticides that are known to cause harm to pollinators and bird species.

Neonicotinoids or “neonics” are a widely used neurotoxic insecticide that have been linked to massive losses of bee and insect populations across the world. Active ingredients in neonics include clothianidin, imidacloprid, thiamethoxam, dinotefuran, acetamiprid, thiacloprid, nithiazine, or fipronil. Each of these active ingredients is known to cause detrimental effects to pollinators, and bird species. Studies have shown that U.S. agriculture is now 48 times more toxic to insects than thirty years ago and neonics are primarily responsible for this increase in toxicity.¹ Additionally, neonics accounted for 92% of total agricultural insect-toxicity from 1992-2014.

In addition to the detrimental impacts to pollinators and bird species, neonics have been linked to negative human health impacts.² Studies conducted by USGS found neonics 300 times more toxic to mammals than parent chemicals and traditional water treatments generally fail to remove neonics.³ Human exposure to neonics have been found in half of the American population⁴, and have even been found in low levels in baby food and commonly consumed fruits and vegetables.⁵

In the last 15 years, neonic use has increased nationwide, including here in New York. In 2014, somewhere between 70 to 76 U.S. tons of neonic active ingredients were used in the state of New York.⁶ Neonic’s have been found in the Hudson River estuary, including concentrations of acetamiprid, imidacloprid, and atrazine.

Alternatives to neonics are readily available, and cost effective.⁷ A study conducted on neonic replacements, found in 96% of cases neonics can be replaced by effective and directly usable alternative pest control methods. In 78% of cases, at least one non-chemical alternative method can replace neonics.

¹ <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0220029>

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5289916/>

³ <https://pubs.er.usgs.gov/publication/70201737>

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/31288196>

⁵ <https://ehjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12940-018-0441-7>

⁶ <https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/impacts-neonics-in-ny-water-report.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160412019302351?via%3Dihub#screen-reader-main-title>

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