

Power-in-Pollinators Initiative

Bee Better Certification for Electric Power Companies

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EPRI's Power-in-Pollinator Initiative and the Xerces Society are collaborating on a new effort: Bee Better Certification for electric power companies. In 2017, Xerces launched the Bee Better Certified program, a first of its kind pollinator-focused certification that awards third-party audited credentials to farms that protect and restore pollinator habitat and protect pollinators from pesticides. Since the launch of the program, nearly 20,000 acres of farmland have been certified nationwide, including farms as diverse as vineyards, tree nut orchards, grain, and vegetable producers. Ingredients sourced from these farms are now appearing in products displaying the Bee Better Certified seal in major retailers such as Costco, Walmart, Trader Joes, and Kroger. As of Spring 2021, companies such as Nestle and Häagen-Dazs, are working to launch new Bee Better Certified-labeled products. This rapid growth and public exposure is positioning the Bee Better Certification as a reputable public-facing eco-label with a specific focus on pollinators.

There is potential for a Bee Better Certified program to support other types of land. Electric power company landholdings offer an opportunity for the conservation of pollinators. A third-party verified pollinator habitat certification program that is scientifically robust AND tailored to the considerations of electric power companies is achievable. Such a certification program can develop confidence from the public, regulators, and community stakeholders in conservation stewardship actions. Similar engineering, architectural and construction certification systems, such as LEED, offer benefits including expedited permitting, positive community relations, and state or city tax incentives.

Electric power companies have various land asset types, including substations, solar sites, power plant sites, right-of-ways, and more. Some of the lands are owned by power companies, others are managed via easements, and still others are leased. The land itself might be fallow, heavily managed, or transect urban and agricultural areas. There are also laws that limit land manage practices that may support bees, such as vegetation height limits, mowing requirements, and OSHA safety rules. The land type, ownership, laws and other limitations need to be thoughtfully considered in order to understand pollinator habitat applicability and appropriate land management practices.

Beginning in 2021, EPRI will begin a two-year effort with Xerces Society to develop a nationally recognized third-party verified Bee Better Certification program for electric power companies. We anticipate this initial effort to include solar sites, rights-of-ways, substations, and possibly more. EPRI and Xerces will work with ecologists, entomologists, power companies, solar developers, and other experts to develop a certification that is applicable, usable, and ecologically robust. We anticipate the new certification to be released in late 2022 along with training for third-party verifiers.

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