

The State-by-State Movement to Restrict Neonics Pesticides

By Louise Washer

It is becoming clearer than ever that we cannot count on the EPA to protect people or pollinators from toxic pesticides. Environmental and food safety advocates have recently sued the agency and won judgments requiring more testing of both [neonicotinoids, known especially for harming bees](#), and [glyphosate, the active ingredient in RoundUp](#) known to cause cancer and threaten endangered species, such as the monarch butterfly.

This summer the [EPA's neonic studies](#) were released showing that these pesticides are likely to adversely affect from two-thirds to over three-fourths of America's endangered species—1,225 to 1,445 species in all. This includes all amphibians and the majority of already endangered fish, birds, and mammals, as well as pollinators and the plants they pollinate.



As a result of inaction at the federal level, state and local policy makers are stepping in. [Seven states](#) and [dozens of municipalities](#) have restricted neonics. Here's how you can join this movement.

State Action You Can Take

Seven states have passed some kind of neonic restrictions: Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Vermont. Three more, California, Colorado and Rhode Island, have introduced bills that have not passed yet.

Maine and New Jersey's laws have the most impactful restrictions. They essentially ban neonics from use on turf grass and ornamental landscaping. The other states have restricted retail sales of neonics (ie, you can't buy them at Lowes), but certified applicators (i.e. lawn care companies and golf courses) can still use them.

New York took the step of introducing a bill in 2021 and 2022, which almost passed, that would restrict neonic-coated seed used in agriculture. This [Cornell report](#) found no direct economic benefit to farmers who used coated seed. The reports points to the importance of addressing neonics in agriculture to protect pollinators but also water quality, aquatic life, and human health. There is more work to do in every state!

Local Action You Can Take

Talk to your city councilors or town representatives and ask them to propose local ordinances that ban pesticide use on municipal property. [Here](#) is a map of cities and towns with local restrictions. [Here](#) is a recent example of an ordinance from Norwalk, CT.

Federal-Level Action You Can Take

Municipal rights to set local pesticide policy are under attack at the national level, though! Congressional bill [H.R. 7266](#) would preempt, and therefore nullify, the local ordinances we are all working to pass. Passing preemption laws is a major focus of the pesticide industry, and it is lobbying now for HR 7266 to be attached to the next federal Farm Bill. [Learn more and find action steps here...](#)

Tell your U.S. Representative and Senators [here](#) to support communities by opposing H.R. 7266 and supporting the Protect America's Children from Toxic Pesticides Act (PACTPA), which contains a provision affirming local authority to restrict pesticides.

More Science Linking Neonics to Pollinator Declines

An extensive 2020 [report](#) from Cornell shows that neonics potentially pose a risk to pollinators due to their high toxicity, systemic activity in plants (i.e., they spread throughout the entire plant, contaminating pollen and nectar, which are food sources for pollinators), and relatively lengthy persistence in the environment.

That report shows neonic exposures in agricultural fields were likely to impact honeybees 74% of the time. Exposures were often found at over 100 times the concentration known to impact pollinators. Furthermore, exposures in field crop settings occurred months and even years after neonicotinoids were used. Particularly concerning is the ubiquity of soils containing neonicotinoids at levels known to be toxic to pollinators. These contaminated soils pose a threat to ground-nesting bees, which comprise 70% of native bees in the US. For exposure from ornamental plants and turf containing weedy flowers, impact was found to be even higher, at 89% and 100% of the time respectively.

This Cornell [study](#) on how neonics affect grassland birds illustrates how this group of pesticides is hollowing out our ecosystems, and for that reason pose a unique threat that requires urgent action.

Download the Pollinator Pathway [neonic Fact Sheet](#) to share.