

# Graduate Assistantship – Honey bee Ecology

Seeking an enthusiastic graduate student at the M.S. or Ph.D. level to join Megan O'Rourke's agroecology lab at Virginia Tech to assist in a USDA funded project examining "Bee-friendly beef production." The position focuses on how native wildflowers incorporated into grazing systems impact honey production and honey bee performance. The assistantship is available as early as Jan. 2020.

## OVERVIEW

The graduate student will join an interdisciplinary team composed of a grassland ecologist (Ben Tracy), weed scientist (Michael Flessner), economist (Catherine Larochelle), and entomologist (Megan O'Rourke) at Virginia Tech examining ways to incorporate native wildflowers into grazing systems in the Eastern U.S. and impacts on ecosystem services. It is funded by a USDA Agroecosystem Management grant entitled: "Bee-friendly beef: Developing biodiverse grazing systems in Virginia."

Grasslands in the Eastern U.S. are limited in their capacity to provide services due to a lack of plant diversity. This is especially true in Southeastern grazing systems, which are dominated by a non-native grass species, tall fescue. We seek to diversify Southeastern grazing systems by incorporating more native warm season grasses and wildflowers. The overall project will examine: 1) best management practices for establishing grasslands of native warm-season grasses and wildflowers, 2) impacts on cattle productivity, and 3) and impacts on pollination services.

This assistantship will focus on fulfilling the pollination objective of the overall project. Specifically, the student will work with a network of ten farms to examine the impacts of native wildflower habitats on honey production and honeybee performance. Ph.D. students will have the opportunity to develop independent projects and expand the scope of work to such things as impacts on honeybee health or native bees.

## QUALIFICATIONS:

- B.S. or M.S. in entomology, biology, ecology or related field.
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills and an ability to work both independently and collaboratively with researchers and growers from different backgrounds.
- High attention to detail.

## PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS:

- Experience with honeybees.
- Research background and publication record
- M.S. degree

## TO APPLY:

Please direct questions to Megan O'Rourke at [megorust@vt.edu](mailto:megorust@vt.edu). To apply, please email: (1) a cover letter discussing your qualifications, research interests, and motivations for this position, (2) your CV, and (3) copies of your transcripts and GRE scores (unofficial ok) to [megorust@vt.edu](mailto:megorust@vt.edu) with the subject line: "GRA honey bee grasslands."