

News Release

May 20, 2015



Olympia Beekeepers Association members install hives in an Olympia Airport field that will be full of flowering blackberries this summer. From left: Laurie Pyne, James Martin and Roy Manicke.

Airport Is A-Buzz with New Tenants **30,000 honey bees will feast on flowering blackberries at Olympia Regional Airport**

Eyeing the grassy fields at Olympia Regional Airport, local beekeepers saw a potentially perfect environment for raising honey bees.

As bee populations continue to decline, beekeepers are looking for opportunities to site hives in safe locations with abundant food supplies. A growing trend is to install hives at airports.

“Airports with their big green open spaces can be perfect spots for bees,” said Laurie Pyne, Olympia Beekeepers Association (OBA) president.

The association presented a plan to Rudy Rudolph, Port of Olympia’s airport director, and found the Port to be very interested in collaborating on the project.

“We see this as a great opportunity to partner with the Olympia Beekeepers Association to make a positive contribution to the environment,” said Rudolph.

Rudolph identified five potential sites for the apiary. “When Rudy took us to the last spot, I saw immediately that it is a perfect site--a large, grassy field protected by a fence and a tree line, and full of blackberries,” smiled Pyne. “We are grateful that the Port is willing to partner with us and excited for the opportunity to raise awareness about bees,” she said.

Last week, the airport welcomed its new tenants when OBA members James Martin, Roy Manicke and Pyne installed approximately 30,000 honey bees in two hives. The airport bees are a hybrid of two prominent strains: Italian and Carniolan, which are sub-species imported from Europe long ago.

Members of the OBA will regularly monitor and maintain the hives and help the bees become accustomed to their new home. Until the surrounding blackberries flower, they will keep feeders full of sugar syrup to ensure the bees have a sufficient food supply.

Eventually, OBA will harvest honey from the airport apiary. "This year the bees will depend upon their honey to survive through the winter," said Pyne. "Next year we can begin harvesting honey and we will recognize its Olympia Airport origins on the label."

"If the colonies do very well, we may have to split the hives next year," she added. With the bee population declining about 40% in Washington last year and at the same rate nationwide, new hives would be a plus.

The decline of bee populations over the last two decades has had a corollary affect on the production of fruits and vegetables. Bees pollinate approximately one-third of the food we eat, including 80 percent of all flowering crops.

Olympia Regional Airport joins other airports in the beekeeping trend. The largest airport apiary in the world is at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago. The 28 hives they installed in 2011 have expanded to over 75 hives with over one million bees.

Airports in Germany pioneered on-airport apiary programs as early as 1999. These include international airports at Hamburg, Munich and Dusseldorf.

Other airports having apiaries are Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, Lambert-St. Louis International Airport and Montréal-Mirabel International Airport in Mirabel, Québec

###

Media Contact:

Kathleen White, Communications & Public Affairs Manager
360.528.8012 KathleenW@portolympia.com

About the Port of Olympia

The southernmost deepwater port on Puget Sound, the Port of Olympia owns and operates an international shipping terminal that handles a range of breakbulk and project cargoes. The Port also owns and operates Swantown Marina & Boatworks, a 733-slip recreational marina and boat haulout/repair facility, a regional airport and a real estate division. A community port, it generates an estimated 7,249 total direct, induced and indirect jobs as documented by Martin Associates in the 2009 data study, *The Economic Impact of the Port of Olympia*, January 2011, available at www.portolympia.com.