

## **HONEYBEE PROGRAM AT VALE – 2020**

The honeybee pollination program operated under the supervision of Vale's Environmental Restoration department has continued to expand over the seven years the company has been involved in maintaining bee hives on the company property.

Starting with six hives, housed in a trailer located off Big Nickel Road, the number of hives has expanded over the years with five different locations. Currently there are thirty hives in two locations, twenty-four located between Sudbury and Copper Cliff green house just south of the super stack, and six hives located next to the Copper Cliff green house. Gardeners at the community garden plots outside the green house have reaped the benefits of the honeybees' services for the past two years.

The thirty hives going into the winter are composed of twenty double chamber hives and ten hives composed of one deep chamber and one shallow. Last year's experiment with single chamber hives did not go well with almost all of these failing to survive.

Although the hives annually demonstrate very strong build-up in the spring and early summer, one disappointing aspect of the program has been the very poor honey crop produced by Vale hives in the fall. The six hives at my own yard this year produced almost the same amount of honey as did all thirty of Vale hives! The problem appears to be the lack of late summer forage plants on the mining property. In the spring there is an abundant bloom of dandelion, bird's foot trefoil, but by August the entire area is covered with various grasses, but almost no sign of clover, goldenrod, or aster. Plans for 2021 currently call for continuing with 30 hives, possibly relocation some to new locations and an aggressive program of seeding the grassy areas with alsike clover.

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