Legality of Beekeeping in Michigan
By Erin Furman (4/28/13)

Michigan law places very few limitations on its residents’ ability to have bees in any setting (urban or otherwise). While more than 90 cities in the United States have banned beekeeping within city limits, most Michigan cities do not have ordinances outlawing the practice. A recently-made exception to this is Detroit, which did not include a provision protecting the ability of its residents to have bees in the agricultural ordinance it passed in the spring of 2009. While, arguably, Detroit residents could have bees because there is no explicit law or rule outlawing beekeeping, the city’s ban on livestock could be interpreted to include bees.

Importantly, Michigan does not have a statewide inspection program, nor does it require beekeepers to obtain a permit to have a beehive or harvest honey. Based on the overview provided in the GAAMP for “Beekeeping and Apiary Management,” it can be inferred that this lack of regulation is largely the result of the important role honey bees play in pollinating agricultural crops such as fruits and vegetables.

The GAAMP describes the social hierarchy of bees as well as factors that can affect their foraging behaviors. It recommends various densities for honey bee colonies based upon the number of hives and the lot size devoted to the hives. Urban beekeepers should take care not to overpopulate their yards with bees. They also should be wary of hive placement, take measures to prevent bee swarming, and ensure that there are adequate sources of fresh water and sunlight near the hives.