

Mid-America Monarch Initiative
Monarch Butterfly Habitat Restoration: A Concept Proposal
Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
In a partnership with
National Wildlife Federation and Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies*
June 2015

This is a concept proposal for state fish and wildlife agencies, in partnership with the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, National Wildlife Federation and its affiliates, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other partners to develop a regional strategic, coordinated, and comprehensive Monarch Butterfly habitat restoration action plan in the most important area in the nation for Monarchs (see attached map showing importance of Mid-America). Possible funding to create this regional plan is available from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation which just announced a new Monarch grants program (proposals are due July 15, 2015). The State and Tribal Wildlife Grants program's competitive grants portion also has made Monarchs a priority. This concept proposal outlines the need, possible actions and partners that might work together to develop such a regional plan to restore Monarch habitat in Mid-America and thus prevent the Monarch Butterfly from being listed under the Endangered Species Act. Specific requested actions are at the end of this concept proposal.

Monarch Butterflies are in rapid decline with their population significantly reduced as measured on their wintering grounds in Mexico. At one time, there was up to 20 acres of Monarchs overwintering in one area and now there is about 2.5 acres. A variety of groups have petitioned the FWS for listing the species as endangered. President Obama has issued an executive order for pollinators overall and Secretary Jewell has asked Dan Ashe, Director of FWS, to lead a Monarch restoration initiative. The FWS and AFWA have signed an MOU to work together as have FWS and NWF to help restore the Monarch (see attached). The Monarch Joint Venture (based in Minnesota and using USFS funds) is playing a coordinating role among the many players. USGS and others are conducting crucial research. Preliminary science points to lack of milkweed in the United States, especially in the Midwest and Southcentral region as a critical limiting factor for Monarchs. The greatest need appears to be to restore Monarch habitat by planting and distributing local, native milkweed seed, along with other important pollinator plants, to public (federal, state and municipal) and private lands (farmers, homeowners, nature centers, businesses, houses of worship, schools, etc.).

The Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, in partnership with many other local, state, and federal agencies and conservation organizations, is a natural leader to develop a regional habitat restoration plan. There already is great interest and recognition that by working together we can develop and implement a large landscape effort to help the Monarch. Such an effort would include a comprehensive approach to restore milkweed on public and private lands in the region. This would include developing a target acreage based on science (being developed by USGS, USFS and FWS in cooperation with Monarch Watch and the Monarch Joint Venture). Once a target acreage is set, each state could evaluate what its contribution might be to reaching the target. Below are some ideas that might form the basis of a coordinated Monarch habitat restoration action plan:

The regional plan would focus on dramatically increase the availability of milkweed in the region via planting of seeds and plugs. State and other existing public lands offer an opportunity to do this at scale. Increasing Monarch habitat on public lands could include state wildlife management areas and other state lands as well as city and county parks. By seeding some of these areas with milkweed we can

significantly and quickly increase this important Monarch host plant. Some state agencies have the capacity to grow milkweed seed to make it available for their use and/or others such as big and small private landowners. In addition, State Department of Transportation and county road departments already are being encouraged to plant milkweed along roadsides without mowing or spraying.

In addition, by engaging private property owners from large ones such as farmers to small ones such as homeowners we can supplement the restoration on public lands. Private land acreage would be an important component with state agency and other private land biologists reaching out to farmers and other landowners to plant milkweed. There already is a lot of interest from the agricultural community as the threat of the Monarch becoming an officially listed endangered species is evoking interest in being proactive.

Lastly but importantly a regional plan would address reaching the smaller private landowners by encouraging at least ten by ten foot plots of milkweed where people live, work, play, learn and worship (e.g. homes, schools, houses of worship, etc.). National Wildlife Federation and its affiliates are eager to partner with State fish and wildlife agencies to distribute local, native milkweed seed, along with other important pollinator plants, to homeowners, nature centers, city park departments, businesses, houses of worship, schools, etc. A goal might be to create at least 10,000 (number needs to be determined) 10 by 10 plots of milkweed. NWF has a large Gardening for Wildlife program (www.nwf.org/garden) that encourages people to create wildlife habitat at their homes, schools and congregations (more than 190,000 to date); this network will be employed to plant these 10 by 10 patches. NWF is about to solicit city mayors in Mid-America to take the Monarch Pledge and work with their citizens and lands.

To kick-start the development of a regional habitat restoration plan, a workshop for state wildlife agencies, similar to that recently undertaken for long-eared bats, would be organized. USGS plans to determine the total acreage needed and the priority areas for habitat restoration by fall 2015. This information would be shared at the workshop and used as a basis for determining the scope of a regional plan and state contributions towards an overall habitat acreage goal. Additionally, a coordinator for states would allow follow up and further development of the regional plan upon the workshop's completion. A few pilot states would actively convene key stakeholders to develop individual state based action plans that would form the backbone of any regional action plan. Ultimately, some combination of the organization and function of Joint Ventures and Flyways, with a Coordinator, an Oversight/Management Team and a Technical Team seems to be a sensible approach to continental management of the monarch and improving the science of monarch management. In either case, full participation by agencies and NGOs doing significant management for monarch, most notably states, will be essential. The workshop would help determine what and how this coordinating mechanism might work.

Individual state agencies will be able to contribute towards the development and implementation of a regional plan as they wish. A steering committee of interested states and partners would organize the workshop, provide guidance to the staff coordinator and to finally outline the key elements of the regional plan. Each state would then identify its contribution to the regional plan; some can be part of restoration solely on their public lands, coordinating with other state and municipal lands, some can be part of distributing the seed, some can grow the seed, and some can provide technical and educational advice and simply promote the need for planting milkweed. The workshop would help identify interest and commitment from the state agencies. State fish and wildlife agencies are the logic lead to convene

the various interests in each state to create a coordinated action plan. Iowa (<http://monarch.ent.iastate.edu/>), Texas, and Missouri already are part of convening such efforts. There is great interest among agriculture community, state DOT's, academic community, and conservation groups.

Funding for this initiative would be secured by the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, in partnership with AFWA and NWF, for a coordinated collaborative approach among state agencies from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the 2016 competitive State Wildlife Grants (up to 500k), as well possibly additional support from federal agencies.

*Other partners include US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Forest Service, Monarch Joint Venture and others as determined

NFWF Proposal DRAFT Elements:

1. Workshop

Target audience: state fish and wildlife agencies in the MAFWA as well as Texas and Oklahoma, FWS, USGS, USFS, Monarch Joint Venture, Pheasants Forever, NWF and select other conservation groups.

Objectives:

- share latest science, with focus on identification of priority habitat areas and acreage needs within Mid-America;
- determine elements of a strategic comprehensive regional flyway plan focused on increasing monarch habitat through milkweed and other pollinator plantings;
- facilitate involvement from state wildlife agencies to work collaboratively within the region and to provide leadership to develop state level plans; and
- discuss and recommend coordinating mechanisms to continue to work together on a region wide basis.

Funds needed for organizer(s), travel for state wildlife agencies, partners, and speakers, facility and facilitator, materials, and other workshop supplies.

2. Coordinator

Staff to organize workshop and follow up state wildlife agency involvement/coordination; coordinate closely with major regional partners including Monarch JV, US Fish and Wildlife Service regional offices (Region 3 and 2), and others are deemed valuable. NWF and AFWA would also provide some coordinating support.

3. Pilot state monarch habitat restoration plans

Several states (e.g. Iowa, Missouri, and Texas) are actively involved in participating or leading the convening of various monarch interests and develop a comprehensive plan for their state. These efforts will ultimately be the backbone of any regional plan. Target interests would

include: state DOTs, state agricultural departments, key/interested municipal parks departments, gardening groups, federal public lands agencies, etc.

Funds needed to hire facilitators, facilities, and materials.

Action Requested:

The NFWF proposal is due July 15, 2015. We respectfully request MAFWA consider:

- 1. MAFWA endorse being the primary applicant on the NFWF grant. NWF and AFWA would be subcontractors:**
- 2. MAFWA appoint a small committee of MAFWA state monarch experts or those with a keen interest (e.g. wildlife diversity or private lands biologists) to work with NWF (Naomi Edelson) and AFWA (Jonathan Mawdsley) to finalize a draft NFWF proposal;**
- 3. MAFWA Executive Committee approve draft proposal to NFWF; and**
- 4. MAFWA Executive Committee invite TX and OK to join in the proposal.**

For more information, contact Naomi Edelson, Senior Director, National Wildlife Federation at edelsonn@nwf.org or 202-797-6889 or 202 657-2024



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Monarch Butterfly: Fall & Spring Migrations





**Joint Memorandum Regarding
Collaborative Efforts to Conserve the
Monarch Butterfly and Other Native
Pollinators**



To: State Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Secretary, Department of Natural Resources
of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico
Governor of Guam
Governor of U.S. Virgin Islands
Governor of American Samoa
Governor of Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Mayor of the District of Columbia

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) join in a common voice to urge you as leaders of the State and Territorial fish and wildlife agencies to take creative actions on behalf of monarch butterflies and other pollinators. We ask you to be resourceful in developing projects supported with financial assistance funds from the Service that include actions that either directly or indirectly benefit the monarch butterfly and other pollinators, to the extent that such actions fall within the management authority of your agencies.

Many species of pollinators, including butterflies and bees, have experienced severe declines in the past two decades. The population of monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) has declined more than 90 percent. The Presidents of the United States and Mexico and the Prime Minister of Canada have called for cooperative action. This decline also prompted a recent petition for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

In response to these population-level declines, on June 20, 2014 the White House issued a Presidential Memorandum directing Federal actions to address pollinator conservation. On September 4, 2014, the Service's Director issued a Service-wide charge to develop a strategy for monarch conservation that addresses habitat restoration and enhancement, education and outreach, and monitoring and research needs. Both of these initiatives include aggressive schedules for implementation.

To promote joint plans and efforts for monarch conservation, AFWA passed Resolution 2014-1 on September 24, 2014. This resolution supports "voluntary and incentive-based efforts to address threats of loss, fragmentation and modification of monarch breeding habitat" including numerous milkweed species which serve as the monarch butterfly's larval host plants in North America.

We ask that you consider adding the monarch butterfly and other pollinator species as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in your State Wildlife Action Plan. This will allow State Wildlife

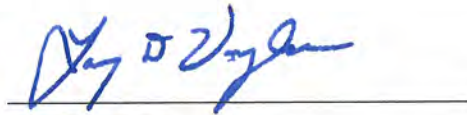
Grant Program (SWG) funds to be used for implementing conservation efforts to benefit these species.

States may also include actions that support monarch and pollinator conservation in projects funded through other Service programs. For example, projects funded by the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration and Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration programs may incorporate practices to conserve monarch butterflies and other pollinators, such as planting locally native milkweed in grassland restoration projects. Monarch butterfly habitat and other pollinators' habitats may also be conserved through other Service programs, such as National Coastal Wetlands Restoration, North American Wetlands Conservation, and Endangered Species projects. We also encourage States to work with other partners, private landowners, and the public to increase awareness and expand knowledge in support of this vital initiative. Doing so will help us reach and engage young people and other segments of society that will be crucial to support for conservation in the future.

For additional guidance and support, please visit the Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program at <http://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/Pollinators/Pollinators.htm> for resources you may find useful. Please use the contacts listed on these sites to share your ideas and successes. Working together we can help restore this iconic butterfly and other pollinator species that are so important to the American people.



Dan Ashe
Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Larry Voyles
President, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies