

## Working Lands Matter for Monarch Butterflies

*Farmers, ranchers, and the agricultural community are essential partners in achieving a sustainable monarch butterfly population*

The eastern monarch butterfly population has declined by more than 80 percent over the past two decades due to a variety of challenges. In order to ensure the population can recover from severe



weather events and that the species' unique migration will continue for future generations, there is a pressing need to restore and enhance habitat for monarchs.

Farmers, ranchers, and landowners have unique roles to play in voluntarily supporting monarch populations. Much of the agricultural land in the United States is located along the monarch migration route and breeding sites and could support the plants monarchs rely upon throughout their lifecycle.

### Agriculture, Monarchs Thriving Together

Monarch conservation can exist in concert with productive agriculture and livestock operations. An increase in milkweed and nectar plants appropriately placed and managed in rural areas can benefit monarchs without inhibiting production.

Voluntary efforts can create, enhance, and protect monarch habitat while also maintaining flexibility in your operations. More breeding habitat and food resources, including milkweed and nectar sources will help restore monarch populations to their historical levels. Habitat for monarch butterflies and other pollinators can be established in non-crop areas such as field borders, pivot corners, conservation lands, ditches, and buffers.

### Growing Stewardship

As stewards of the land, farmers, ranchers, and landowners already are engaged in conservation initiatives that create multiple benefits for soil health, water quality, wildlife, and pollinator habitat. These efforts demonstrate that continuing innovation in agricultural practices and data science can improve environmental outcomes, increase crop productivity, and make land available for conservation efforts.



### An Urgent Challenge

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is in the process of reviewing whether to list the butterfly under the Endangered Species Act. A decision on whether to propose listing is expected by June 2019.

In 2018, the Service will begin evaluating monarch conservation measures, including volunteer habitat establishment and expansion efforts in the agriculture sector, to assess the impact of these efforts towards ensuring a resilient monarch population.

The work of farmers, ranchers, and landowners today can influence the agency's decision in the coming months. Establishing and expanding monarch habitat now could factor into the Service's decision.

Without ramping up proactive measures to protect this species and other pollinators, the risk of losing the monarch migration is high.

Coordinated, collaborative efforts across all sectors is required. Engaging in voluntary habitat conservation can be a win-win for all involved, and help ensure productive lands and resilient monarch populations for future generations.

### **Learning More and Taking Action**

Many resources and programs exist to support farmers, ranchers, and landowners in establishing monarch butterfly habitat. This list of [resources](#) has been compiled by the Monarch Collaborative to offer you relevant technical information on managing and restoring habitat for monarch butterflies.



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have developed an agreement that provides [farmers and ranchers with predictability](#) as they implement conservation practices to improve monarch habitat.

The federal agencies' agreement, [a conference report](#), provides farmers and ranchers that implement conservation measures under a NRCS-approved conservation plan, long-term clarity that they are in compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (i.e., they are exempt from any incidental take associated with implementing conservation practices and measures included in their NRCS conservation plan) if and when the monarch is listed under the ESA.

### **About the Monarch Collaborative**

The Monarch Collaborative is a diverse and dedicated group of organizations spanning the research community, agricultural production, conservation causes, public agencies, and others who are working to promote conservation and recovery of monarch butterflies and their migratory phenomenon.