

Working Lands for Wildlife Monarch Butterfly

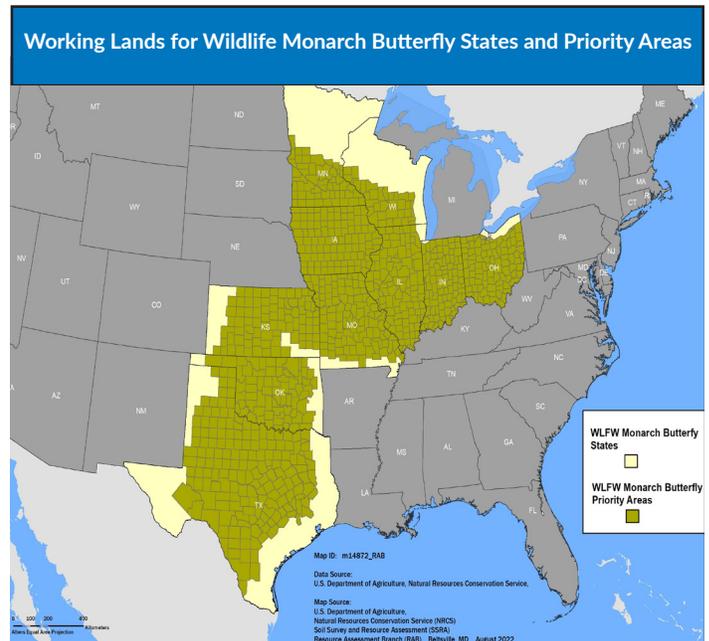
2021 Progress Report

In 2017, the Monarch Butterfly Habitat Development Project was converted into the Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) Monarch Butterfly landscape conservation initiative as its ninth national target species. The monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) is one of the most iconic butterflies in North America and is known in part for its annual multi-generational migration from overwintering sites in central Mexico and coastal California to as far north as Canada. Multiple critical population stressors including the loss and degradation of habitat across the species' range have led to a significant decrease in the number of monarchs in the U.S. over the past few decades. To help address this declining trend, ongoing conservation efforts are focused on establishing and managing monarch habitats in several important regions.

NRCS and the Monarch Butterfly

The agency's primary geographic focus for monarch habitat has been on Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, and Wisconsin, the primary eastern monarch migration corridor in a 10-state area of the central U.S. (see map). While monarchs can benefit from more than three dozen NRCS conservation practices, this 10-state effort targets practices at the heart of the eastern migration corridor within the Midwest and Great Plains. In general, the Midwest habitat strategy is focused on the planting of milkweed and nectar-rich plants to support breeding. In the Great Plains habitat strategy, the effort is focused on improving monarch habitat on existing grasslands to support migration.

Specific conservation activities include increasing the abundance of native milkweed plants (*Asclepias* spp.) – the sole source of food for monarch caterpillars – and the availability of native nectar rich flowers throughout the monarch's range. NRCS is working with America's farmers, ranchers, and forest managers on voluntary conservation efforts to combat the decline of monarchs on private lands by establishing new habitat and managing existing habitat for monarchs (see table).



Working Lands for Wildlife Monarch Butterfly Applied Acres, Obligations, and Contracts: 2016-2021

State	Applied Amount, Acres	Practice Obligation	# of Contracts
Illinois	365	\$180,964	46
Indiana	1,789	\$156,602	32
Iowa	15,476	\$280,428	35
Kansas	207	\$187,104	28
Minnesota	-	-	-
Missouri	33,801	\$784,177	136
Ohio	1,877	\$221,527	60
Oklahoma	322,307	\$1,892,121	66
Texas	61,085	\$246,490	13
Wisconsin	92	\$38,079	8
Total	436,972	\$3,987,482	424

*Instead of availing WLFW MOBU, MN chose to benefit monarchs through implementation of the Honey Bee Pollinator initiative. Since that initiative was discontinued after FY21, MN requested WLFW MOBU funding for FY22.