

Monarch Butterfly Habitat Development

The monarch is one of the most familiar butterflies in North America. The orange-and-black butterfly is known for its annual, multi-generational migration from Mexico to as far north as Canada. Monarch butterflies depend on milkweed to lay their eggs during the journey. Populations have decreased significantly over the past two decades, in part because of the decrease in native plants, including milkweed, on which their caterpillars feed. Agriculture and development have removed much of the native milkweed that once spanned the country.

Because monarch butterflies are always on the move, they need to have the right plants at the right time along their migration route. Caterpillars need to feed on milkweed to complete their life cycle, and adult butterflies need the right nectar producing plants in bloom for needed energy.

NRCS is working with agricultural producers to combat the decline of monarch butterflies by planting milkweed and other nectar-rich plants on private lands. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) in partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

To accelerate conservation to benefit monarch butterflies, NRCS is targeting conservation efforts at the heart of the butterfly's migration route. NRCS launched the effort in 2015, and assistance is available for producers in 9 states in the Southern Plains and Midwest, including Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas and Wisconsin.

With assistance from NRCS, producers and conservation partners can plant milkweed and nectar-rich plants along field borders, in buffers along waterways or around wetlands, in pastures and other suitable locations. NRCS is working with conservation partners, including the Xerces Society, to develop habitat assessment tools, rangeland management guides, and recommended lists of native plants to meet the unique habitat needs for the monarch butterfly.

For more details and information on the project visit <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/wi/programs/farmbill/rcpp/>. Eligible producers are to contact their nearest NRCS service center to apply: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>.

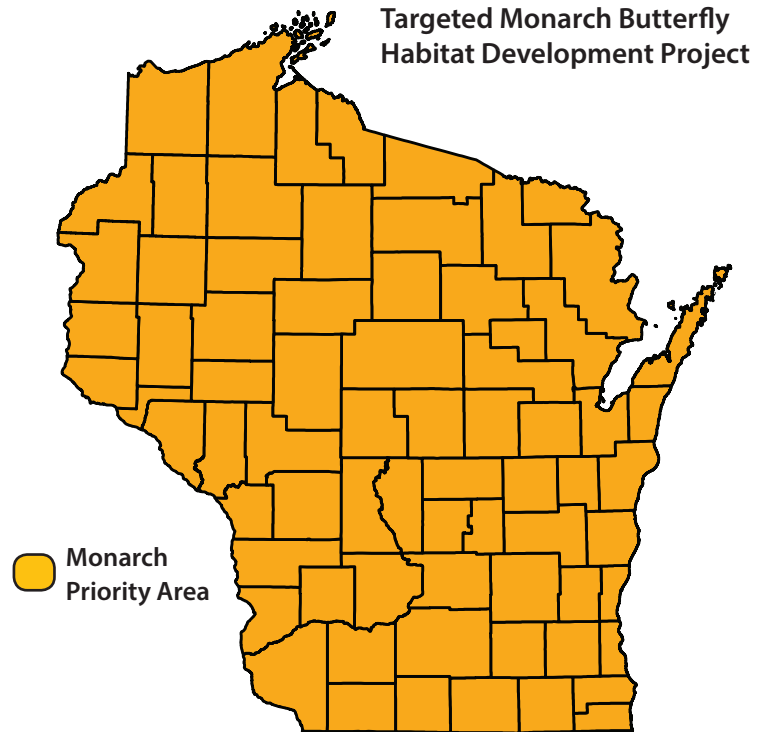


Photo by Kate Redmond