

Monarch Habitat Tips for Farmers

Written by the members of the Agriculture Working Group of the Wisconsin Monarch Collaborative

Farmers share a sense of responsibility for the land they manage and the life it supports. Their role as land stewards includes producing not only food and fiber, but also ecosystem services including habitat for monarchs, bees and other pollinators.

All farms have land outside the production areas that can serve as habitat. Ditch banks, unproductive fields, fields edges, farmsteads, woodlands and internal roadways are excellent areas to establish native wildflowers including milkweed. Meanwhile, farmers can continue to control weeds within the production fields. Farmers know their land best and can apply habitat conservation in a way that best suits their needs. Teamwork between conservation experts and farmers leads to more successful habitat establishment while enabling farmers to maintain focus on growing crops and raising livestock. Also, farms can demonstrate their contribution publicly through habitat and signage near roadways and through promotion to consumers of their products.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have developed an [agreement](#)¹ that provides farmers and ranchers with predictability as they implement conservation practices to improve monarch habitat.

The federal agencies' agreement, a [conference report](#)², 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.

If you have working lands and you'd like to create monarch habitat, below are programs that can assist with this:

Incentive, Cost-Share, and Technical Assistance Programs:

- [NRCS - Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#)
(<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip>)
- [NRCS - Conservation Stewardship Program \(CSP\)](#)
(<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/financial/csp>)
- [NRCS - Agricultural Conservation Easement Program \(ACEP\)](#)
(<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/acep>)
- [The Bee and Butterfly Habitat Fund: Seed a Legacy Program](#)
(<http://beeandbutterflyfund.org/habitat-programs/seed-a-legacy-program>)
- [FSA - Conservation Reserve Program \(CRP\)](#)
(<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-program>)

¹ <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/releases/?cid=NRCSEPRD1310271>

² https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/PA_NRCSConsumption/download/?cid=nrcseprd1310223&ext=pdf

- [FSA - Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program \(CREP\)](https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-enhancement)
(<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-enhancement>)
- [USDA/WDNR Voluntary Public Access & Habitat Incentives Program](https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/lands/VPA)
(<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/lands/VPA>)
- [WDNR's Landowner Incentive Program \(LIP\)](https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/endangeredresources/LIP.html)
(<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/endangeredresources/LIP.html>)
- [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife](https://www.fws.gov/midwest/partners/getinvolved.html)
(<https://www.fws.gov/midwest/partners/getinvolved.html>)
- [DATCP Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grants](https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/ProducerLedProjects.aspx)
(https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/ProducerLedProjects.aspx)
- [Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever Farm Bill Biologist Program](https://www.pheasantsforever.org/Habitat/findBiologist.aspx)
(<https://www.pheasantsforever.org/Habitat/findBiologist.aspx>)

Key resources:

- [The Wisconsin Pollinator Protection Plan's Best Management Practices for Maximizing Pollinator Health & Pollinator Services on Farms](https://datcp.wi.gov/Documents/PPPFarms.pdf) —The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and the UW-Madison Department of Entomology facilitated the creation of a Pollinator Protection Plan, with input from stakeholders across the state. It seeks to improve public understanding of pollinator health issues and actions that affect pollinators and minimize risks to pollinators through voluntary actions that Wisconsin residents, businesses and agencies can take. The BMP's for Maximizing Pollinator Health & Pollinator Services on Farms includes information about beneficial farming practices for pollinators, cost-share and technical assistance for farmers, and information about pesticide use and avoiding drift.
(<https://datcp.wi.gov/Documents/PPPFarms.pdf>)
- [Xerces Pollinator and Pesticide Risk Reduction Guidelines](http://xerces.org/guidelines/pollinator-pesticide-risk-reduction) —This USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) manual provides NRCS state offices and IPM professionals with guidance on conservation strategies that can reduce the risk of pesticides to pollinators in farm landscapes. Adoption of the conservation strategies outlined in the manual may qualify for NRCS support.
(<http://xerces.org/guidelines/pollinator-pesticide-risk-reduction>)
- [Pollinator Meadow Upper Midwest Installation Guide & Checklist](http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/InstallGuideJobSheet_UpperMidwest_CnsrvCvr.pdf) — This guide was created by the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, the Center for Integrated Agriculture Systems, and the University of Wisconsin - Madison. It contains in-depth guidance on how to install nectar and pollen habitat in Upper Midwest Region.
(http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/InstallGuideJobSheet_UpperMidwest_CnsrvCvr.pdf)
- [Habitat Establishment](https://wiatri.net/projects/monarchs/pdfs/habitatEstablishment.pdf) and [Habitat Success](https://wiatri.net/projects/monarchs/pdfs/habitatSuccess.pdf) – Tips from Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever Wisconsin on how to establish high quality habitat on crop field conversions and key factors influencing seeding success.
(<https://wiatri.net/projects/monarchs/pdfs/habitatEstablishment.pdf>)
(<https://wiatri.net/projects/monarchs/pdfs/habitatSuccess.pdf>)