City and County of Denver

Denver, CO

Denver Mayor Michael Johnston

Pledge Summary

The City and County of Denver is the "Mile High" city surrounded by plains and mountains, with a population size of 700,000 and increasing. The Mayor of Denver is committed to wildlife conservation efforts and encourages every city mayor nationwide, to participate in the Mayor's Monarch Pledge.

Action Items Committed for 2025

Communications and Convening

- Engage with community garden groups and urge them to plant native milkweeds and nectar-producing plants.
- Engage with city parks and recreation, public works, sustainability, and other relevant staff to identify opportunities to revise and maintain mowing programs and milkweed / native nectar plant planting programs.
- Engage with developers, planners, landscape architects, and other community leaders and organizers engaged in planning processes to identify opportunities to create monarch habitat.
- Create a community art project to enhance and promote monarch and pollinator conservation as well as cultural awareness and recognition.

Program and Demonstration Gardens

- Host or support a native seed or plant sale, giveaway or swap.
- Plant milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants along roadsides, medians, or public rights-of-way.
- Launch or maintain an outdoor education program(s) (e.g., at schools, after-school programs, community centers and groups) that builds awareness and creates habitat by engaging students, educators, and the community in planting native milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants (i.e., National Wildlife Federation’s Schoolyard Habitats program and Monarch Mission curriculum).
- Earn or maintain recognition for being a wildlife-friendly city by participating in other wildlife and habitat conservation efforts (i.e., National Wildlife Federation’s Community Wildlife Habitat program).
- Add or maintain native milkweed and nectar-producing plants in gardens in the community.
- Launch, expand, or continue an invasive species removal program that will support the re-establishment of native habitat for monarch butterflies and other pollinators.

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Past Pledge Archive

Mayor Name	Program Year	Pledge Date	Achievement
Denver Mayor Michael Johnston	2025	2/20/2025	Leadership Circle
Mayor of Denver Colorado Mike Johnston	2024	3/1/2024	Signatories
Mayor of Denver Colorado Michael Hancock	2023	1/11/2023	Signatories
Mayor of Denver Colorado Michael Hancock	2022	3/14/2022	Leadership Circle
Mayor Michael Hancock	2021	3/12/2021	Leadership Circle

Action Items

In total, how many individuals have been reached through the Mayors' Monarch Pledge in your community this year (Jan-Dec)? Please limit your answer to only the number of individuals reached in the answer field below (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only.).

2000

Of the total number of individuals engaged, how many youth (0-18) were reached through the Mayors' Monarch Pledge in your community this year (Jan. - Dec.)? If none, please write 0." (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only.)

500

In total, how many acres of monarch habitat have been created in your city in the last 12 months? Please limit your answer to only the number of acres in the answer field below (e.g., 3). Note: 1 acre = roughly the size of a football field.

50

Where was the habitat created this year? Example locations may include residences, schools, places of worship, rights-of-way, roadsides, community gardens, shared public spaces, and more.

Yards of residents, school gardens, roadsides, rights-of-ways, Denver public parks.

How are you leveraging the Mayors' Monarch Pledge program to engage marginalized communities, such as low-income communities or communities of color?

Through agency and community partnerships, working together to reach and engage marginalized communities (i.e., Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Latino Outdoors Colorado).

What was your community's motivation for taking and continuing to work on the Mayors' Monarch Pledge?

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Denver Parks & Recreation recognizes the importance of pollinator and wildlife habitat conservation. DPR works with wildlife experts and other key partners to keep habitats protected. From protecting birds during migration, to the bison in our mountain parks, to pledging support for monarch butterflies alongside mayors across the country, it's an important mission to protect key species and the habitats they call home.

What resources have been most helpful to you thus far and what new resources would you like to see to help meet your goals? What resources would be useful to help expand equitable engagement in community processes and access to high-quality, usable nature?

2025 has been an exceptionally challenging financial year for the City and County of Denver, from budget cuts to layoffs. Lack of finances and personnel support has impacted some of the environmental/conservation programs that Denver Parks administers. Funding is probably the number one barrier to completing these important projects.

What else should we know about your monarch butterfly conservation efforts over the last year?

As personnel and leadership within organizations change, so does the support of environmental projects and initiatives. DPR stands by its goals to create and maintain wildlife and resilient habitats.

Selected Action Items

Engage with community garden groups and urge them to plant native milkweeds and nectar-producing plants.

Please describe the groups you engaged with and how you engaged with these groups below.

Gave greenhouse tours to 3 different gardening groups and emphasized native plants and asclepias plants for Monarchs. Staffed three education tables at three different DPR Recreation Centers, talking to folks about the importance of planting native vegetation that encourages pollinators and to promote the Community Wildlife Habitat program.

Engage with city parks and recreation, public works, sustainability, and other relevant staff to identify opportunities to revise and maintain mowing programs and milkweed / native nectar plant planting programs.

How many community organizations and groups participated? Please list them below.

DPR has a number of park districts (10+) that are responsible for mowing practices. Meetings and coordination of maintenance practices are ongoing to ensure mowing practices are being adhered to, for the protection of native plantings.

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Please describe the extent of engagement with these groups and revisions/maintenance implemented for mowing or planting programs.

Coordinated with district operations to remind, refine, and coach on milkweed-supportive mowing projects.

Engage with developers, planners, landscape architects, and other community leaders and organizers engaged in planning processes to identify opportunities to create monarch habitat.

Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.

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Please describe the extent of engagement with these groups and associated opportunities to create monarch habitat.

The Wildlife Management Team and Open Space Team work closely with DPR's Urban Ecology (UE) Planning Team to ensure native plantings are incorporated into planning projects. Urban Ecology continually engages with developers and the design community to build parks and open space that are conducive to wildlife and especially pollinators. They engage with design professionals working on park renovation projects throughout the year, requiring the use of Colorado native plant species and limiting "nonfunctional" turfgrass in parks. UC engages with developers through Denver's "Large Development Review" process to enforce standards on private open space as well as developer constructed publicly accessible parks and open space. In 2025 they met with at least 20 community groups throughout the year to discuss landscape transformation projects – projects in which existing bluegrass turf is being removing from parks and replacing with native shortgrass prairie species and pollinator supporting species. UE also completed a GIS based "urban habitat connectivity study" of the City and County of Denver to better understand how pollinators move through the park system and the urban context. This report and mapping information will be available to the public on DPR's website soon. And finally, UE has been partnering with Denver's Community Planning and Development Department to update Denver's Landscaping codes, rules and regulations through the Denver Resilient Landscape Project. New landscaping regulations will be finalized in 2026 that will apply to various development contexts.

Create a community art project to enhance and promote monarch and pollinator conservation as well as cultural awareness and recognition.

Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.

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What community organizations, groups, or leaders (if any) did you partner with or engage to host the event?

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Worked in partnership with the Sand Creek Regional Greenway Foundation to create a Wildlife Mural along the greenway that has a pollinator/plant message. 30 volunteers from the SCRG & DPR.

How many individuals were engaged in this effort? Please limit your answer to only the number of individuals reached in the answer field (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only, e.g. 50).

30

Please describe the community art project that was implemented in your community and how it contributed to cultural awareness and recognition (e.g., number of art installations, type of art).

The community art project engaged the surrounding community of diverse cultures and backgrounds, by recruiting volunteers from the neighborhood. The Sand Creek Regional Greenway is a nearly 13-mile public trail and natural area located in the northeast Denver metro area. Their commitment is to enhance the equitable access, awareness, and engagement of the Greenway. DPR works in collaboration with the Greenway to provide free or affordable experiential nature-based education, outdoor recreation and wellness programs, and environmental stewardship opportunities to broaden engagement.

Host or support a native seed or plant sale, giveaway or swap.

Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.

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How many plants were sold and/or given away at your event? (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only)

300

How many people attended your event? (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only)

2000

What community organizations, groups, or leaders (if any) did you partner with or engage to host the event?

DPR Rec Centers: Hosted 2 seed events – one at Harvey Park Rec Center and a seed giveaway with Crusoe. At the Purge Your Spurge event were native plants and Asclepias were given away in exchange for myrtle spurge weeds, we promoted the NWF's Community Wildlife Habitat program and offered free native plants to partner school habitat gardens. Reached 8 schools.

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Earn or maintain recognition for being a wildlife-friendly city by participating in other wildlife and habitat conservation efforts (i.e., National Wildlife Federation's Community Wildlife Habitat program).

Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.

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What community organizations, groups, or leaders (if any) did you partner with or engage to complete this effort?

Denver Schools: Reached out to 4 Denver schools to re-engage them in the NWF's Schoolyard Habitat program and presented a wildlife program at each: Joe Shoemaker School, Green Valley Elementary, Rocky Mtn Prep Berkeley, Westerly Creek Elementary.

What program was launched or maintained to complete this effort? (Please include a link to the program, if possible)

DPR's Wildlife Program administers the NWF's Community Wildlife Habitat program, and partners with 25+ public Denver schools to create native plant school gardens. 300 free native plants were given to 8 schools in 2025.

Add or maintain native milkweed and nectar-producing plants in gardens in the community.

What community organizations, groups, or leaders (if any) did you partner with or engage to complete this effort?

Denver Schools: Reached out to 4 Denver schools to re-engage them in the NWF's Schoolyard Habitat program and presented a wildlife program at each: Joe Shoemaker School, Green Valley Elementary, Rocky Mtn Prep Berkeley, Westerly Creek Elementary.

How many plants were planted? (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only)

300

Please describe your effort in completing this action.

The 300 free plants given to public school gardens as part of the Community Wildlife Habitat program – were native pollinating plants.

Plant milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants along roadsides, medians, or public rights-of-way.

Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.

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Where are the medians, roadsides and public rights-of-way? (Please provide an address or coordinates, if possible, or describe the location)

Greenhouse grew 31,218 Native perennials that were distributed out into Denver parks citywide. 35,106 non-native perennials and 176,399 annuals which help as nectar sources.

How many milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants were planted? (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only)

31218

What is the total acreage of median and public right-of-way that has been planted with milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants? Note: 1 acre = roughly the size of a football field.

10

Please describe the maintenance schedule for these planted areas.

To clarify total acreage - DPR manages, maintains and improves pollinator habitats city-wide throughout Denver's urban park system. Overall, the Denver Park system encompasses over 6,000 acres with a mix of wildlife habitats that support monarch's and other pollinators. The 10 acres reflects certain portions (medians and public-right-of-ways) of the park-wide properties that we manage. Watering and pruning of these native plant areas required less watering and maintenance. Watering once a week was adequate for maintaining a healthy garden.

Launch or maintain an outdoor education program(s) (e.g., at schools, after-school programs, community centers and groups) that builds awareness and creates habitat by engaging students, educators, and the community in planting native milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants (i.e., National Wildlife Federation's Schoolyard Habitats program and Monarch Mission curriculum).

Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.

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What program was launched or maintained to complete this effort? If you are involved with another National Wildlife Federation program, please mention that below. (Please include a link to the program, if possible)

Youth Stewards program – engaged 178 youth in environmental education, resilient landscapes, and pollinator habitat - 3,845 perennials installed (primarily wildflowers) - 10+

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acres seeded with a grass/forb mix.

How many schools, community groups, leaders, or centers were engaged in this effort? How many of these collaborations and partnerships are "new"? (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only)

4

Please list the names of the schools you are working with.

Reached out to 4 Denver schools to re-engage them in the NWF's Schoolyard Habitat program, and presented a wildlife program at each: Joe Shoemaker School, Green Valley Elementary, Rocky Mtn Prep Berkeley, Westerly Creek Elementary.

What resources, if any, are you providing to educators?

Free native plants, environmental outdoor classroom programs (urban wildlife).

How many students and educators would you estimate are being reached? Please limit your answer to only number of adults and youths engaged in the answer field (e.g., 200 students and 20 educators).

2,000 overall - (Schools-100 students, and 4 educators)

What community organizations, groups, or leaders (if any) did you partner with or engage to complete this effort?

Denver Audubon, Colorado Parks & Wildlife, and Volunteers.

How many acres of monarch and pollinator habitat have been planted through this effort? Please limit your answer to only the number of acres in the answer field below (e.g., 0.5 acres). For reference, 1 acre = 43,560 square feet and is about the size of a football field without the end zones. Note: 1 acre = roughly the size of a football field.

10

What is the maintenance schedule to ensure planted habitat is maintained?

Spring through Summer - 1xweek

Launch, expand, or continue an invasive species removal program that will support the re-establishment of native habitat for monarch butterflies and other pollinators.

Upload any relevant documents, images, or other attachments related to your effort on this action.

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What is the total acreage of land treated to remove invasive plants? Note: 1 acre = roughly the size of a football field.

50

Please describe the extent of revisions or maintenance to invasive species removal programs, as well as the practices or techniques used to remove the invasive plants.

Conducted noxious/invasive species management on 3,971 acres of city-owned property. To clarify the 3971 acres, Denver Parks manages, maintains and improve pollinator habitats, and we work city-wide throughout Denver's urban park system. Overall, the Denver Urban Park system encompasses over 6,000 acres with a mix of wildlife habitats that support monarch's and other pollinators. The 3,971 acres reflects the park-wide properties that we manage. If we were to guess, approx. 50 acres were treated. Tabled a "Purge the Spurge" event to educate 2,000+ community members on noxious weed management. Community members exchanged over 50 lbs of Myrtle Spurge in exchange for approx. 300 variety of native forbs and graminoids, including several Asclepias spp.

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