City of McAllen

McAllen, TX

Mayor Jim Darling

Pledge Summary

The City of McAllen is a city in south Texas with a population of roughly 142,000. The city is the largest in Hidalgo County of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, a region known for high biodiversity and as a destination for ecotourism. Mayor Jim Darling of McAllen, Texas has committed to conserving the monarch butterfly and the pollinator community so important to ecosystem and economic health. Mayor Darling looks forward to engaging residents in building more pollinator habitat throughout the city.

Action Items Committed for 2021

Communications and Convening

- Issue a proclamation to raise awareness about the decline of the monarch butterfly and the species' need for habitat. This proclamation must incorporate a focus on monarch conservation.
- Launch or maintain a public communication effort to encourage residents to plant monarch gardens at their homes or in their neighborhoods. (If you have community members who speak a language other than English, we encourage you to also communicate in that language; Champion Pledges must communicate in that language.)
- Engage with gardening leaders and partners (e.g., Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, Nature Centers, Native Plant Society Chapters , other long-standing and influential community leaders) to support monarch butterfly conservation.
- 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.
- Facilitate or support a milkweed seed collection and propagation effort.
- 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).
- Initiate or support community science (or citizen science) efforts that help monitor monarch migration and health.
- Host or support a monarch butterfly festival that is accessible to all residents in the community and promotes monarch and pollinator conservation, as well as cultural

Created with the DynamicPDF Essentials Edition. [u50:v1.14.0.49966]

awareness and recognition.

Past Pledge Archive

Mayor Name	Program Year	Pledge Date	Achievement
Mayor Javier Villalobos	2026	12/2/2025	
Mayor Javier Villalobos	2025	12/10/2024	Leadership Circle
Major Javier Villalobos	2024	1/11/2024	Leadership Circle
Mayor Javier Villalobos	2023	3/30/2023	Leadership Circle
Mayor Javier Villalobos	2022	4/19/2022	Leadership Circle
Mayor Jim Darling	2021	3/19/2021	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.).

15000

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.)

10000 youth and 5000 adults (estimated numbers)

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.

1.0

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.

Schools, Roadsides, Parks

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

Our most significant effort is to go to local elementary schools and actively engage with students during monarch/pollinator garden installation. We did this at 6 different elementary schools this year, during which we gave a brief lesson to the school kids about pollinators and native plants, then engaged them during planting.

Created with the DynamicPDF Essentials Edition. [u50:v1.14.0.49966]

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

To continue to take action to conserve monarch butterflies and other pollinators while engaging with the community.

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?

NA

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

We have also been working the NWF Resilient Habitats to create roadside habitats in the City of McAllen, which has just started to lead to on-the-ground habitat restoration and will continue in the next year. Through Quinta Mazatlan and the Center for Urban Ecology, we also have initiated a small native plant propagation project with the goal of providing native plants for continued habitat creation in the city.

Selected Action Items

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

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

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

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.

Please describe the maintenance schedule for these planted areas.

Host or support a monarch butterfly festival that is accessible to all residents in the community and promotes monarch and pollinator conservation, as well as cultural awareness and recognition.

How many estimated individuals attended the event? Please limit your answer to only the number of individuals reached in the answer field ((Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only), e.g. 500)

Created with the DynamicPDF Essentials Edition. [u50:v1.14.0.49966]

What was the date of your festival?

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

Please describe the details of your monarch butterfly festival and how you ensured the event was accessible by all residents in the community (e.g., events, length, notable successes, outreach, location).

Issue a proclamation to raise awareness about the decline of the monarch butterfly and the species' need for habitat. This proclamation must incorporate a focus on monarch conservation.

Date of Proclamation:

4/12/2021

Title of Proclamation (i.e. – Monarch Day or Pollinator Week):

Mayors' Monarch Pledge Day

Upload a copy of your proclamation.

Mayor's Monarch Pledge Proclamation.docx

Upload a copy of your proclamation.

Mayor's Proclamation 2021.jpg

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.

FB_IMG_1639154480637.jpg

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

FB_IMG_1639154496506.jpg

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

Keep McAllen Beautiful and Monarch Project

Created with the DynamicPDF Essentials Edition. [u50:v1.14.0.49966]

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).

175

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).

Installed a tile mural on a stand pipe off of Trenton Road and Bicentennial Road, a very visible spot. This was an addition to existing murals along McAllen hike and bike trails showcasing local artists and wildlife, including several dedicated to Monarch butterflies.

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.

FB_IMG_1635944006947.jpg

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

FB_IMG_1635944020680.jpg

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

200

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

300

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

Quinta Mazatlan and Mike Heep from Heeps' Native Plant Nursery

Facilitate or support a milkweed seed collection and propagation effort.

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

10

What species were collected or propagated?

Created with the DynamicPDF Essentials Edition. [u50:v1.14.0.49966]

Zizotes Milkweed (Asclepias oenotheroides)

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

Center for Urban Ecology (City of McAllen)

Please describe the milkweed seed collection and propagation effort that you hosted.

We planted 250 Zizotes Milkweed seeds in a seedbed on 7/9/2021. The primary goal is to allow these plants to go to seed and collect them for further milkweed propagation, and given that these milkweeds re-sprout from their roots, have a steady supply of milkweed seeds going forward. This is a pilot project, so if it is successful we will evaluate adding more beds and propagating more milkweeds. We followed by transplanting 25 Zizotes Milkweed to a garden patch for further seed collection and as a part of a NWF Resilient Habitat.

Initiate or support community science (or citizen science) efforts that help monitor monarch migration and health.

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

Monarch Annual Relative Obs.jpg

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

Monarch Nectar Plant List (iNaturalist).jpg

How many estimated individuals participated in your community science effort? Please limit your answer to only the number of individuals reached in the answer field (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only, e.g. 150).

211

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

Quinta Mazatlan, The Center for Urban Ecology, Texas Master Naturalists, and the McAllen Public Library.

Please describe the community science program that you supported or initiated. Provide a link to any relevant programs, if possible.

We have curated and encouraged the community to upload observations of Monarchs as part of ongoing efforts to increase usage of iNaturalist. We went through all 667 (as of 7/8/2021) iNaturalist observations added to the iNaturalist platform in the Lower Rio

Created with the DynamicPDF Essentials Edition. [u50:v1.14.0.49966]

Grande Valley and added Life Stage annotations (as needed), plus created collection projects for each life stage (adult, pupa, larva, and egg). Using this information we have compiled a list of plant species that Monarch butterflies use as nectar sources, recommending them as focal species when creating monarch gardens in the region. Outreach for using this platform to record observations has been done at Texas Master Naturalist meetings, public (virtual) presentations through the McAllen Public Library, and Quinta Mazatlan's social media presence - particularly for the City Nature Challenge 2021, which had 144 observers make 7,806 observations in four days. Adult Monarch Project: https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/lrgv-monarchs-adults Pupa Monarch Project: https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/lrgv-monarchs-pupae Caterpillar Monarch Project: https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/lrgv-monarchs-caterpillars Egg Monarch Project: https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/lrgv-monarchs-eggs

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.

WE1 (resized).png

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

WE6 (resized).png

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

RS2 (resized).png

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)

We maintained our LRGV Learning Landscapes program in collaboration with the US Fish & Wildlife Service and the McAllen Independent School District to create monarch and pollinator gardens at elementary schools in our community. Students were given a brief overview of the plants going into the garden and the kinds of wildlife that will be attracted to them. The schools are using these gardens as part of their science curriculum. (https://texanbynature.org/projects/lower-rgv-learning-landscapes-collaborative/)

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

Created with the DynamicPDF Essentials Edition. [u50:v1.14.0.49966]

NUMBERS only)

6

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

Alvarez Elementary, Bonham Elementary, Castaneda Elementary, McAuliffe Elementary, Roosevelt Elementary, and Wilson Elementary.

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

We provide knowledge on how to install the gardens (working with the schools on site preparation and installation), compost (from the McAllen Composting Facility), and native plants (from USFWS). The program also offers resources in the form of interpretive signage, mulch, and bird baths.

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).

180 students and 20 teachers/staff.

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

USFWS, McAllen ISD, McAllen Composting Facility, Quinta Mazatlan, and the Center for Urban Ecology.

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.

0.05

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

We recommend the schools water the gardens for the first 1-2 months for establishment (once or twice every other week). During the first growing season, we recommend schools weed the gardens to remove invasive grasses re-growing through the mulch/compost layer. After that, periodic maintenance as needed (watering and weeding).

Launch or maintain a public communication effort to encourage residents to plant monarch gardens at their homes or in their neighborhoods. (If you have community members who speak a language other than English, we encourage you to also communicate in that language; Champion Pledges must communicate in that language.)

Created with the DynamicPDF Essentials Edition. [u50:v1.14.0.49966]

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

20211210_111703.jpg

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

gardening for wildlife.png

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

Mike Heep Landscaping with Native Plants.png

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

native plant brochure 1.png

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

native plant brochure 2.png

Please describe the methods of public communication below (e.g., printed materials, social media, print media).

We regularly offer programs that emphasize the importance of using native plants to support our local wildlife, with specific recommendations to use milkweeds and nectar plants for monarchs. We offered three "Gardening for Wildlife" workshops this year which include information about the relationship between monarchs and milkweeds, as well as a featured presentation by local native plant expert Mike Heep. We also integrate monarch lifecycles and conservation into our family and children's programs, such as Forest Tots. We have print materials available on-site and when we have information booths at festival and events. We publish educational outreach materials in local magazines and newspapers (see https://rgvisionmagazine.com/magnificent-monarch-migration-3/ for an example).

Engage with gardening leaders and partners (e.g., Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, Nature Centers, Native Plant Society Chapters , other long-standing and influential community leaders) to support monarch butterfly conservation.

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

Created with the DynamicPDF Essentials Edition. [u50:v1.14.0.49966]

Texas Master Naturalists (South Texas Border Chapter), Texas Master Gardeners (Hidalgo and Cameron Counties chapters), Center for Urban Ecology (City of McAllen), LRGV Learning Landscapes Collaborative.

Please describe the extent of engagement with these groups and their monarch butterfly conservation efforts.

We hosted 2 tours for the Cameron County and Hidalgo County Texas Master Gardeners, during which we talked about our habitat restoration efforts (techniques, plant species used) on site. We also hosted the first Learning Landscapes Invasive Species workshop for school grounds crews to help them maintain monarch and pollinator gardens installed on their school grounds, including providing them a stipend for attending the workshop. Texas Master Naturalists volunteered with the Center for Urban Ecology to help maintain monarch and pollinator habitats at Quinta Mazatlan.

Created with the DynamicPDF Essentials Edition. [u50:v1.14.0.49966]