City of Mesa

Mesa, AZ

Mayor Mark Freeman

Pledge Summary

The decline of monarch butterflies is a serious issue, driven largely by habitat loss from urban development. By joining the Mayors' Monarch Pledge, we commit to creating and improving habitats for these essential pollinators. Cities can help by preserving natural areas, planting native milkweed in parks, gardens, and along streets, and we can inspire our residents to do the same in their yards. The City of Mesa, situated in central Arizona’s bustling metropolitan area, is nestled in the beautiful desert Southwest. Mesa is fortunate to work with Southwest Monarch Study, a nonprofit dedicated to researching the migration and breeding patterns of monarch butterflies across Arizona and the Southwestern U. S. Through their efforts, we know that there is much more to discover about the wild monarch migration throughout our region. It is an honor for me to support this initiative from the National Wildlife Federation and to join hundreds of other mayors and community leaders in this effort.

Action Items Committed for 2025

Communications and Convening

- 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.)

Program and Demonstration Gardens

- Add or maintain native milkweed and nectar-producing plants in gardens in the community.
- 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.
- Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.

Past Pledge Archive

Mayor Name	Program Year	Pledge Date	Achievement
Mayor Mark Freeman	2026	3/5/2026	
Mayor Mark Freeman	2025	2/6/2025	Signatories
Mayor John Giles	2024	3/5/2024	Signatories
Mayor John Giles	2023	3/30/2023	Signatories

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Mayor John Giles	2022	2/15/2022	Signatories
Mayor John Giles	2021	4/12/2021	Signatories

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.).

6200

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.)

4000

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

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.

Pollinator and monarch habitat in Mesa is being created across a wide range of public and community spaces. This includes our community garden - including expanded pollinator-focused beds at Mesa Urban Garden. Libraries and shared public spaces, such as the Monarch Haven & Reading Sanctuary and the new Monarch Waystation at Red Mountain Library also offer habitat. Neighborhood tree-planting sites, where residents in low-shade canopy areas receive trees and learn about native plants and monarch-friendly landscaping. Parks and rights-of-way, where native plants and pollinator-supportive vegetation are being incorporated into landscaping. Residential spaces is another location for habitat. Our community outreach encourages homeowners to plant native milkweed, nectar plants, and pollinator gardens in yards and patio containers. Our local Mesa Community College has beautiful waystations on their campus. Together, these efforts create a growing mosaic of habitat throughout the city—linking public spaces, neighborhoods, and community-led projects to support monarchs and other pollinators.

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

Our tree-planting initiatives - many of which are targeted in low-shade canopy, low-income communities - provide key opportunities to promote monarch conservation, native plants, and pollinator-friendly landscaping.

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

Mesa's participation in the Mayors' Monarch Pledge stems from our deep commitment to environmental stewardship, biodiversity, and community engagement. Monarch butterflies are a powerful symbol of the health of our local ecosystems—and by protecting them, we also support pollinators vital to our desert landscape. The pledge aligns perfectly with Mesa's Climate Action Plan goals and our ongoing work to expand pollinator habitat through initiatives such as the Monarch Haven & Reading Sanctuary at Red Mountain Library, the Mesa Urban Garden pollinator beds, and our Trees Are Cool campaign. Beyond habitat creation, the pledge inspires collaboration among city departments, schools, libraries, and community organizations—helping residents learn how simple actions, like planting native milkweed or reducing pesticide use, can make a difference. Mesa continues this work because it not only benefits monarchs but strengthens our community's connection to nature, sustainability, and shared responsibility for a healthier environment.

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?

Several resources have been especially valuable in advancing Mesa's monarch and pollinator work. The National Wildlife Federation's educational materials and habitat creation guidelines have helped us build clear, consistent messaging for residents and community partners. Planting guides, signage templates, and best practices for native milkweed and nectar plants has supported both staff and volunteers in creating high-quality habitat across public spaces. This year, it was great to connect with AZ Wildlife Federation. Their support helped our efforts. To continue meeting our goals—and to expand equitable engagement—we would benefit from additional resources that help tailor pollinator outreach to diverse communities. This includes multilingual educational materials, culturally relevant examples of pollinator-friendly landscaping, and case studies that highlight successful engagement strategies in low-income or low-shade canopy neighborhoods. Funding models or mini-grant templates to support resident-led habitat projects would also help build local ownership.

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

This year, Mesa expanded its monarch conservation work through several high-visibility community events and partnerships. One of the most impactful was our Spring Equinox Celebration, which featured monarch-themed activities and education. The event highlighted our collaboration with the Arizona Wildlife Federation, and our efforts were later featured in their statewide magazine—helping amplify monarch conservation messages well beyond Mesa. We also celebrated youth leadership through Eagle Scout Morgan W.'s Monarch Waystation installation at the Red Mountain Library's Monarch Haven & Reading Sanctuary. Her project included both habitat planting and the creation of additional educational signage, strengthening the site as a community learning and engagement space. Another great addition was a regional effort led by the City of Phoenix, called Planting for Monarchs Month. They provided graphics and worked with nurseries to offer a

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discount on milkweeds during the month of September. These efforts, combined with our ongoing habitat creation, robust outreach, and shade-equity work, helped deepen community awareness and broaden participation in monarch conservation throughout the city.

Selected Action Items

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.)

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

Arizona Wildlife News Magazine Spring 2025.pdf

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

Mayors Monarch Pledge News Release 2025_March Final.pdf

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

Spring Equinox Media Advisory 2025 March.pdf

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

Social Media Posts 2025 R.pdf

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

Mesa maintains an active and ongoing public communication effort to encourage residents to create monarch and pollinator gardens at home and in their neighborhoods. We regularly share resources such as social media posts, blog articles, and planting guides highlighting native milkweed, nectar plants, and pollinator-friendly landscaping. These materials are promoted through multiple channels, including our Water – Use It Wisely outreach and sustainability platforms. Ahead of our “Spring Equinox in the Monarch Garden” event, we issued a press release (attached) to help raise awareness and promote monarch conservation. We also participated in the regional “Planting for Monarchs Month” promotion with the City of Phoenix, helping amplify pollinator-friendly gardening messages across the Valley. In addition, pollinator and monarch content is regularly featured in our two monthly eNewsletters reaching more than 7,000 subscribers. These newsletters

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include landscaping guidance, event information, and our Sustainability Savings Tip, which is also printed and distributed at public libraries and posted on our sustainability website. Through these coordinated communication efforts, residents receive frequent, accessible opportunities to learn about monarch-friendly gardening and take action to support pollinators in their own outdoor spaces. Find our two blogs on Water - Use It Wisely site: https://wateruseitwisely.com/blog/plant-of-the-month-desert-milkweed-fit-for-a-queen-and-other-royals/ and https://wateruseitwisely.com/blog/celebrate-planting-for-monarchs-month-in-september/

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

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

Monarch Waystation Dedication Kathrine and Morgan 10.18.25 .JPG

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

Monarch Waystation Dedication Kathrine Morgan and Scott AZ WL Fed 10.18.25 .JPG

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

MYCAF Monarch Waystation Dedication Book to Melissa 10.18.25.JPG

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

MYCAF Monarch Waystation Dedication Scott AZ WL Fed 10.18.25.JPG

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

Monarch Project Morgan and Kathrine_July 3 2025.JPG

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

Morgan planting July.jpg

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

Troop grading and planting.jpg

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

Waystation Planted Area.jpg

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

Mesa continues to add and maintain native milkweed and nectar-producing plants throughout the community, with strong support from local partners and youth leaders. This year, we worked closely with the Mesa Youth Climate Action Fund (MYCAF) to support habitat creation projects led by young people in our community. One of the most impactful was Eagle Scout Morgan W.'s Monarch Waystation installation at the Red Mountain Library's Monarch Haven & Reading Sanctuary. Funded in part by a MYCAF grant, Morgan's project added new native milkweed and nectar-rich plantings, as well as additional interpretive signage to help educate visitors about the monarch lifecycle and the importance of pollinator habitat. The site continues to build as a living demonstration garden, further expanding the network of monarch-friendly spaces across Mesa. These collaborations not only enhance habitat quality but also empower local youth, strengthen community stewardship, and inspire residents to plant and care for native pollinator gardens in their own neighborhoods.

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

21

Please describe your effort in completing this action.

While 21 plants were located in the waystation planted area, many other projects across the city planted even more milkweed and pollinator-friendly nectar plants. In fact, at least 3 additional Mesa Youth Climate Action Fund projects were planted for pollinators and butterflies.

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.

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

Mayors Monarch Pledge News Release 2025_March Final.pdf

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

X promo LG Spring Equinox Mar 6.png

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

X promo LG Spring Equinox Mar 5.png

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

X promo LG Spring Equinox Mar 4.png

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

X promo LG Spring Equinox Mar 3.png

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

X promo LG Spring Equinox Mar 2.png

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

X promo LG Spring Equinox Mar.png

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

X promo LG Monarch Pledge Mar 2.png

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

X promo LG Monarch Pledge Mar.png

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)

350

What was the date of your festival?

March 22

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

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Our Environmental & Sustainability Department partnered with the Library Department and Parks Department for this community event. SW Monarch Study and Desert Botanical Garden, and University of Arizona Maricopa County Master Gardeners also participated. AZ Wildlife Federation was invited but had a conflict and was unable to attend. Of course, Mayor Freeman participated. Our Parks Department has a new group called M.O.R.E. which stands for Mesa Outdoor Recreation Experience. They included a hands-on activity making wildflower seed bombs. We had community volunteers also participate teaching about desert plants and about insects.

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).

To celebrate the Mayors' Monarch Pledge initiative, Red Mountain Library hosted a Spring Equinox event at the Monarch Haven & Reading Sanctuary on Saturday, March 22, from 10 a.m. to Noon. This free, family-friendly event featured crafts, educational exhibits, and insights from Southwest Monarch Study, Desert Botanical Garden, Master Gardeners and city landscape experts. It was heavily promoted through newsletters and social media.

Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.

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

Monarch Haven & Reading Sanctuary Signs.JPG

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

Monarch Signs at Mesa Urban Garden.JPG

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

6. Monarch Waystation New Sign 2025 Mesa Urban Garden.jpg

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

8. Monarch Waystation Oct 25.JPG

How many garden signs are being displayed and where are they located? (Enter WHOLE NUMBERS only)

8

Please describe the educational information on the sign(s), and provide any links to externally purchased sign(s).

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1.-3. Monarch Haven & Reading Sanctuary Signs at park entry at the Red Mountain Library 4.-5. Monarch Life Cycle and Monarch vs Queen Sign at Mesa Urban Garden 6. New Waystation Sign at Mesa Urban Garden 7. New Waystation Sign Monarch Haven & Reading Sanctuary at Red Mountain Library (ordered but has not arrived) 8. New Monarch Waystation Sign for the Monarch Haven & Reading Sanctuary (photo shows temporary sign, but permanent sign will be installed by mid-December) See photos.

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