Town of Moraga

Moraga, CA

Mayor Renata Sos

Pledge Summary

The Town of Moraga is a semi-rural community nestled in the beautiful hillsides of the East Bay of Contra Costa County, California. Moraga's population is 17,692. In November 2020, the Moraga Garden Club launched the “Moraga for Monarchs” initiative which resulted in the installation of a 2,600 square foot Monarch Habitat and Demonstration Garden at Rancho Laguna Park. The garden includes native and fire-safe plants that flower between early spring and late fall each year and interpretive signage to educate the community. The project included significant fundraising efforts and countless volunteer hours. The Moraga for Monarchs initiative spanned over 15 months during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Community contributions included over 2,870 volunteer hours and donations exceeding $92,000. Community donations include in-kind donations from 27 businesses and monetary donations from 98 individual donors, 3 service clubs, 3 social clubs, 4 garden clubs, and 1 Moraga Foundation. The garden includes over 600 plants including 95 native and drought tolerant varieties to increase the habitat for monarch and pollinators.

Action Items Committed for 2023

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

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

Systems Change

- Reduce or eliminate the use of herbicides, pesticides, or other chemicals that are harmful to monarchs and pollinators and urban wildlife.

Past Pledge Archive

Mayor Name	Program Year	Pledge Date	Achievement
Mayor Kerry Hillis	2026	4/29/2026	
Mayor Steve Woehleke	2025	4/2/2025	Signatories
Mayor Teresa Onoda	2024	4/10/2024	Signatories
Mayor Renata Sos	2023	3/24/2023	Signatories
Mayor Renata Sos	2022	3/21/2022	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.).

20000

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.)

16,000 adults, 4,000 youth

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.

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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.

Rancho Laguna Park, residences, schools, places of worship, senior living facilities, local farm, and Saint Mary's College

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

Early in the year Moraga for Monarchs consulted with a local farm (Family Harvest Farm) employing transition-aged youth. The farm was considering growing and selling native milkweeds. Moraga for Monarchs provided information regarding propagation, lists of other vendors selling milkweed as well as milkweed seeds to help establish the effort. Also the youth groups who camp overnight at the park.

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

Our Xerces priority one action zone for recovering western monarchs. The almost extinction levels of western monarchs overwintering at CA overwintering sites in 2020. The continuing need to grow habitats, not just gardens for pollinators and Lepidoptera of all kinds as their numbers decrease.

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?

Xerces and Monarch Joint Venture websites, activities and webinars have been most helpful to the Moraga for Monarchs effort. We would like more: Western monarch science, a consolidation of communication channels (keep us up to date with a "single source of truth"), information regarding grants and funding available to us, utilization of regional synergies (information, pamphlets and activities – we have long proposed MJV form local chapters), and consensus amongst experts regarding key conservation points – such as those listed with links below.

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

We strive to provide the community science-based recovery advice. We continue to watch and process some confusion regarding the following key issues: Overall monarch conservation status (Andy Davis) https://www.science.org/content/article/monarch-butterfly-not-endangered-conservation-authority-decides, Appropriateness of tropical milkweed (Hugh Dingle) https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=58257 Newer guidelines regarding where to plant milkweed near west coast overwintering locations in the Bay Area. Xerces apparently updating the bay guidelines. Recommendation is now that it is okay to plant directly adjacent to overwintering sites; that differs from Santa Barbara. Perhaps a more consistent guideline so that it is easier for the public to understand? https://xerces.org/western-monarch-call-to-action#:~:text=Restore%20breeding%20and%20migratory%20habitat%20in%20California.,of%20monarchs%20in%20the%20spring. Some of the native nectar plants recommended for monarch use by large, reputa

Selected Action Items

Reduce or eliminate the use of herbicides, pesticides, or other chemicals that are harmful to monarchs and pollinators and urban wildlife.

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

What is the status of this action? Please limit your answer to either "complete" or "in progress" in the answer field below.

If this action is Complete, please include the date it was completed and share a 1-2 sentence description. Please include a copy of the policy by uploading or linking below.

If this action is In Progress, please describe your progress and a target date when you plan to complete action.

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.

The Town of Moraga collaberates with Moraga Garden Club to provide western monarch conservation support. The effort is called Moraga for Monarchs. The group is made up of Moraga Garden Club members and community volunteers. It is funded by donations made by local service groups and individuals. The group coordinated with a wide range of other garden organizations in 2023. Early in the year Moraga for Monarchs consulted with a local farm employing transition-aged youth. The farm was considering growing and selling native milkweeds. Moraga for Monarchs provided information regarding propagation, lists of other vendors selling milkweed as well as milkweed seeds to help establish the effort. The Moraga team shared information and photos with Contra Costa Master Gardeners preparing a milkweed video currently available on YouTube, and invited CC Master Gardener graduates to work in the Moraga demonstration garden and with local youth. Monarch conservation talks were also given by the

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Moraga for Monarchs team to people interested in establishing monarch habitats in suburban and school gardens. In 2023, presentations were made to four garden clubs (Montelindo, Lafayette, Orinda Garden Club -Conservation Group and UC Botanical Garden volunteers), a Lafayette Orinda Church group, two Daisy Scout troops, a private elementary and a public middle school. Milkweed seed packaging was done with the schools as well. Moraga for Monarchs consulted with a large seniors facility planting a milkweed garden in Pleasanton, CA and shared the magical joys that ensued (wild eggs, caterpillars and eclosing chrysalis) with the residents. The seniors' garden was featured in a local NBC news story. Moraga for Monarchs supported a similar project for a senior community in Walnut Creek, CA. A milkweed garden was put in on the Rossmoor campus along with nectar plants favored by monarchs. A Gardening with Milkweed Tips insert was developed and displayed at the Moraga for Monarchs demonstration garden in a public park. "Gardening for monarchs pocket guides" were also developed and distributed to large groups as well as to ad-hoc garden visitors. These guides were also displayed in the Parks and Recreation office. Plans are in the works to support two eighth grader girls seeking to earn their Scout Silver Awards. Moraga for Monarchs is scheduled to coach these ladies in their quest to teach even younger children about how to help monarchs. The scout earning her Silver Award via a collaboration with Moraga for Monarchs last year participated in an Earth Day event; she distributed milkweed seeds and acted as an ambassador for the monarch effort. Members of the Moraga Garden Club continue to share information about milkweed and monarchs with their club members via monthly meetings and newsletters and with community volunteers interested in tending the demonstration garden. The Town of Moraga recently approved a plan to incorporate a monarch native nectar plant expansion area in the public park that hosts the monarch demonstration habitat. The installation will occur in 2024 if funding is secured.

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

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

A seed library was established at the Moraga Library. The program distributed four pounds of wildflower seed mix, 2 pounds of A. fascicularis seed, 80 small packages of A. speciosa 'Davis" seed as well as 40+ small packages of other nectar plant seed. Additionally in 2023, 250 milkweed starts were given away to local schools, 165 starts were distributed to the community via an Orinda, CA gardening event, a Lafayette Earth Day booth and through a booth at the Moraga Community Faire (sponsored by the Moraga Chamber of Commerce).

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

1000

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

Moraga Chamber of Commerce, Moraga Library, Town of Moraga

Facilitate or support a milkweed seed collection and propagation effort.

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

100

What species were collected or propagated?

Asclepias speciosa, Asclepias speciosa 'Davis' and Ascelpias fascicularis seed

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

Moraga Garden Club, Saint Mary's College, Town of Moraga, Moraga School District

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

Asclepias speciosa, Asclepias speciosa 'Davis' and Ascelpias fascicularis seed was harvested from the demonstration garden at Rancho Laguna Park. A propagation from seed effort was lead by Moraga Garden Club and greenhouse space was shared by a local community garden. Approximately 30 people were involved in the seed harvest, germination and early starts development process. Asclepias speciosa 'Davis' rhizomes were harvested from Saint Mary's College by three different groups. Approximately 40 people were involved in the harvesting, potting and growing process. Seeds have recently been harvested again by Moraga Garden Club. A local elementary school's sixth grade is scheduled to separate seeds from their pods and silks mid November and package them up in small envelopes for the seed library.

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

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).

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

the Monarch Joint Venture and the University of Wisconsin–Madison Arboretum, Moraga4Monarchs,

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

The Moraga for Monarchs team continues to monitor monarch adults and larvae through the Monarch Larva Monitoring (MLMP) Project, a partnership of the Monarch Joint Venture and the University of Wisconsin–Madison Arboretum. They monitor two sites and have trained six team members to do same. The Moraga for Monarchs team obtained a permit from California Department of Fish and Wildlife to submit three deceased monarch tissue samples to Dr. Chris Funk's lab at Colorado State University for their ongoing Monarch Genomics study. Three frozen samples were sent to Colorado in May 2023. Additional samples will be submitted this winter if tissue is discovered at the Moraga demonstration garden site. W. Chris Funk and Mackenzie Woods, Colorado State University Zach Gompert, Utah State University October 12, 2023 Two residents went through Xerces Western Monarch Count training in 2022 and helped conduct the Albany, CA western monarch count over the 2022 Thanksgiving and 2023 New Year's periods. Moraga4Monarchs has submitted over 850 iNaturalist observations with the goal of documenting the ecosystem surrounding the monarch demonstration habitat in Moraga. The effort strives to log insect use of native milkweeds, insect use of native nectar plants said to be favored by monarchs, insect use of non-native nectar plants, monarch predators, and seasonal trends. Groups interested in western monarch recovery efforts are urged to use the app and do the same for the habitats they establish and link to Western Monarch Milkweed Mapper to support the migration studies being conducted by that group certain times of year. The Moraga for Monarchs team has been interested in the role of PA's (pyrrolizidine alkaloids) play in monarch health. Per limited emails with a leading monarch researcher, they planted and have been monitoring monarchs use of Sweet Joe Pye Weed (Eutrochium purpureum) in the Moraga demonstration garden. The team has reported monarchs using their proboscis to probe dried flowerheads. (This is an only an emerging research topic.)

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:

3/22/2023

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

Mayor's Monarch Pledge

Upload a copy of your proclamation.

Mayors-Monarch-Pledge.pdf

Upload a copy of your proclamation.

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