Crystal Lake Park District

Crystal Lake, IL

Executive Director Jason Herbster

Pledge Summary

Charged with providing park and recreation services for approximately 55,000 residents, the Crystal Lake Park District system includes 42 parks spanning over 1,400 acres and program offerings of over 1,000 annually. Facilities include the Nature Center, Main and West Beaches, Colonel Palmer House, Lippold Family Golf Center, Boncosky Softball Complex at Lippold Park, Grand Oaks Recreation/Active Adult Center, the Racket Club, Barlina House Preschool, and numerous picnic shelters. In addition to parks, facilities and programs, the district maintains miles of bike and hiking trails enjoyed by many throughout the year.

Action Items Committed for 2024

Program and Demonstration Gardens

- Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.
- 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.
- Host or support a native seed or plant sale, giveaway or swap.
- 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).
- Plant or maintain a monarch and pollinator-friendly demonstration garden at City Hall or another prominent or culturally significant community location.
- 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.

Past Pledge Archive

Mayor Name	Program Year	Pledge Date	Achievement
Executive Director Jason Herbster	2026	4/8/2026	
Executive Director Jason Herbster	2025	3/27/2025	Signatories
Executive Director Jason Herbster	2024	3/29/2024	Signatories
Executive Director Jason Herbster	2023	3/3/2023	Signatories
Executive Director Jason Herbster	2022	3/22/2022	Signatories

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Action Items

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.

0.5

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

The Crystal Lake Park District was driven to continue its involvement with the Mayors' Monarch Pledge because of our long-standing dedication to creating and maintaining habitats for monarchs and other native pollinators. By participating in the pledge for a second year, we recognized an opportunity to effectively convey the significance of our conservation efforts to the community, promoting awareness and encouraging collective action to support these vital species.

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?

The support of the community, including local environmental organizations and volunteers in natural areas, has been our most valuable resource in achieving our goals. Additionally, our conservation efforts have been strengthened by state and local grants.

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

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.

Public parks and open spaces

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

We have established monarch plantings and placed informative signage in a variety of neighborhood parks. This strategy is designed to bring the beauty of monarch conservation into these communities, fostering a sense of connection and ownership. Furthermore, we continue to offer free programs focused on monarchs and native pollinators, providing

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educational opportunities and hands-on experiences that make the benefits of the pledge accessible to all, regardless of economic or cultural background.

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

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

In the past year, our monarch butterfly conservation efforts have stood out for their dual focus on enhancing existing high-quality natural areas and expanding smaller plantings. The Crystal Lake Park District has long been committed to offering native habitats through well-maintained natural spaces. The Mayors' Monarch Pledge has been crucial in raising awareness of these areas, highlighting their importance in monarch conservation.

Selected Action Items

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

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?

The event was a month long pollinator bio blitz conducted during the month of September in conjunction with the National Recreation and Park Association's Parks for Pollinators initiative. During the month of September, visitors to the Nature Center were asked to use "I Naturalist" to document pollinators found on Crystal Lake Park District properties. Over 2,000 visitors were reached.

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

Approximately 1,000 packets of pollinator friendly native seed packets were given away.

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

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

1200

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Please describe your effort in completing this action.

The Crystal Lake Park District installed over 1,000 milkweed and other native nectar producing plants in a new demonstration garden at the Nature Center.

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

The Crystal Lake Rotary Club Dawnbreakers and local Girl Scouts helped plant the plants.

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

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

200

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.

The Crystal Lake Park District has built and maintained a comprehensive and effective natural area volunteer program, hosting at least seven workdays per month. These dedicated volunteers focus primarily on removing invasive species from two designated Illinois Nature Preserves. In 2023, our volunteers contributed over 300 hours of labor to control invasive species across various park district natural areas. Our invasive species removal programs are regularly assessed and adapted to address the unique challenges posed by different species. We employ a combination of mechanical and chemical control methods, depending on the specific invasive species. Mechanical techniques, such as cutting, prescribed fire, and hand-pulling, are used based on the characteristics of each plant, while chemical controls are applied strategically where needed. This flexible and responsive approach reflects our commitment to preserving the ecological integrity of our natural areas through proactive and adaptive management.

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.

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

Friends of Hackmatack Wildlife Refuge

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)

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500

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).

The Crystal Lake Park District provides the use of Main Beach, one of our most popular parks, free of charge to the Friends of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge for their one day Monarchs and Music. The is free to the public and features educational demonstrations about the importance of monarchs and live music. The event was attended by a culturally diverse population.

What was the date of your festival?

August 11, 024

Plant or maintain a monarch and pollinator-friendly demonstration garden at City Hall or another prominent or culturally significant community location.

Where is the demonstration garden located and how does this location relate to the cultural significance of the monarch (if relevant)? (Please provide an address or coordinates, if possible)

The Crystal Lake Park District Nature Center located at 330 N. Main St. Crystal Lake, IL

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

Plants used for the garden were purchased with a ComEd Green Region Grant. The Rotary Club of Crystal Lake Dawnbreakers provided additional funding and provided volunteer support to plant the new pollinator garden

What is the size of the demonstration garden (in acres)? 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.

0.5

Display educational signage at monarch gardens and pollinator habitat.

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

3

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

There are three signs located at The Nature Center (see attachments). Each of the signs highlight the importance of using native plants to provide habitat.

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

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

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

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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).

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

The Crystal Lake Park District, through the Nature Center, partnered with local community members and organizations to raise awareness about the importance of creating habitats for monarchs and other native pollinators. We have engaged residents of Crystal Lake and surrounding communities through demonstration gardens, permanent exhibits, and educational programs. These efforts are designed to highlight the value of supporting native pollinators and to encourage local action in creating and preserving pollinator-friendly habitats.

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)

The Crystal Lake Park District Nature Center offers field trips for CUSD 47 and several private preschools, with a focus on insects and other pollinator species. We also provide programs for Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, and Scouts BSA, which include valuable information about pollinators and their crucial role in the environment. In addition to these educational

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opportunities, the Nature Center features permanent displays that emphasize the importance of protecting and providing habitats for monarchs and other pollinator species.

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.

0.5

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

Educators are offered access to all of the educational resources owned by the Nature Center, as well as, the opportunity to have their students assist in the planting of native species.

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

The Parks Services division of the Crystal Lake Park District provides maintenance on an ongoing and as needed basis to all planted habitat.

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).

900 students and 20 educators

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)

10

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

Schools from Community Unit School District 47

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