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 2025

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

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.

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1.5

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

The Crystal Lake Park District’s decision to continue participating in the Mayor’s Monarch Pledge was rooted in its ongoing commitment to supporting monarchs and other native pollinators through habitat creation and stewardship. Continuing the pledge allowed the district to further highlight the importance of this work, strengthen public understanding of pollinator conservation, and inspire residents to take an active role in protecting these essential species within 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?

Partnerships within the community have been the most valuable resource in advancing our efforts, particularly collaborations with local environmental groups and the dedication of volunteers who support restoration and stewardship in natural areas. Looking ahead, additional tools such as expanded educational materials, technical guidance, and resources that support inclusive outreach would help strengthen engagement across a broader range of residents. These resources would enhance access to high-quality natural spaces and ensure more equitable participation in conservation and community-based environmental initiatives.

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?

Monarch habitat plantings and interpretive signage in parks across diverse areas help ensure that residents can experience and learn about conservation efforts close to home. In addition, the district offers no-cost educational programs centered on monarchs and native pollinators, creating inclusive, hands-on opportunities that remove financial barriers and encourage participation from residents of all backgrounds.

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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?

Over the past year, monarch conservation efforts within the Crystal Lake Park District have continued to build on both large-scale habitat management and the growth of smaller, targeted plantings throughout the community. Ongoing stewardship of established natural areas remains a priority, ensuring these spaces continue to support monarchs and other pollinators. Participation in the Mayor's Monarch Pledge has also helped elevate the visibility of these efforts, reinforcing the value of native habitats and their role in long-term 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)

1000

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

The Crystal Lake Park District partnered internally with its Environmental Committee to support this action item by creating approximately 1,000 native seed packets for community distribution. These seed packets were made available at The Nature Center and shared through a variety of outreach and tabling events throughout the year. One such event was Music and Monarchs, hosted in collaboration with the Friends of Hackmatack Wildlife Refuge, which provided an opportunity to connect with the community and promote native planting and pollinator conservation.

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.

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

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coordinates, if possible)

Lakewood Meadows Park, 6904 Haligus Rd., Village of Lakewood, IL 60014

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

This effort was completed through collaboration between the Crystal Lake Park District and the Village of Lakewood. The monarch and pollinator-friendly demonstration garden is located within a newly developed park owned and maintained by the Crystal Lake Park District, on land provided by the Village of Lakewood.

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.

.9

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 continues to maintain a strong invasive species removal program supported by a dedicated natural areas volunteer group that hosts seven or more stewardship workdays each month. Volunteer efforts are focused on controlling invasive plants within two Illinois Nature Preserves and other park district natural areas, contributing more than 400 hours of labor in 2025. Removal practices are regularly evaluated and adapted based on site conditions and species present, using a combination of mechanical methods—such as hand pulling, cutting, and prescribed fire—and targeted chemical treatments when appropriate, to support the restoration of native habitat for monarchs and other pollinators.

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?

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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)

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 supported a one-day monarch celebration by providing Main Beach—one of the district's most highly visited parks—as a free, centrally located venue for the Monarchs and Music event hosted by the Friends of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge. The event was open to all residents at no cost and included educational activities and demonstrations highlighting monarch conservation. Hosting the festival in a well-known, accessible location helped attract a broad and culturally diverse audience, ensuring that educational opportunities and community engagement around monarch conservation were available to all.

What was the date of your festival?

08-10-2025

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)

6

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

Three interpretive signs located at The Nature Center were previously reported. Building on that effort, three additional educational signs were installed in 2025. Two of these signs highlight smaller "pollinator pocket" plantings located on park district properties, helping visitors recognize the value of even small-scale habitat. The third sign was placed at the newly developed Lakewood Meadows Park. Titled From Lawn to Lifeline, this interpretive panel explains how native, pollinator-friendly plantings were intentionally incorporated into the park's landscape design to support monarchs and other pollinators.

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

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