City of Ocala

Ocala, FL

Mayor Ben Marciano

Pledge Summary

Ocala is a city located in Marion County, Florida and has a 2025 population of 71,504. The city of Ocala has a variety of beautiful parks that range from upland pines, oak hammocks, urban communities, and retention and recharge wetland ponds. Different parks offer different amenities such as playground equipment, walking trails and courts for various sports. With volunteer opportunities available for both outdoor and indoor facilities, Park Rangers and Recreation crews assist with environmental education and outreach initiatives throughout the year.

Action Items Committed for 2025

Program and Demonstration Gardens

- Host or support a native seed or plant sale, giveaway or swap.
- Earn or maintain recognition for being a wildlife-friendly city by participating in other wildlife and habitat conservation efforts (i.e., National Wildlife Federation’s Community Wildlife Habitat program).
- 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
Mayor Ben Marciano	2025	3/24/2025	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.).

320

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.)

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150

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.

Small pockets inside public parks/National Historic Landmark

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

Our education kit is available to be borrowed by our local Boys and Girls Club and community centers. Our summer Park program hosted 9 "parties" in our local pocket neighborhood parks, while we also provided a free lunch, ice cream, science activities, recreational play and art projects. Having this kit accessible for staff and volunteers to use year-round will be a great asset, and allow more programming to occur outside in our neighborhood parks as well.

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

Many of our staff and affiliates are familiar with NWF curriculum for habitat steward efforts and certifications. This pledge allowed conversations to be had on utilizing native or Florida Friendly landscaping while learning the difference of milkweed plants.

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?

Project WILD Monarch lesson is always impactful for all ages. Having physical models and stages of metamorphosis, migration patterns, and food webs with pesticide bioaccumulation has really been engaging and eye opening to our residents.

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

We have started collecting our most effective teaching tools and lesson plans to create a traveling trunk for outdoor education programs, field trips, and outreach opportunities.

Selected Action Items

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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.

Media (3).jpg

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

300 Native Florida Pollinator Plants were given away

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?

Park Operations staff and volunteers provided plants and education, with the plants themselves grown locally and organically by Goldenrod Meadows in Ocala.

Earn or maintain recognition for being a wildlife-friendly city by participating in other wildlife and habitat conservation efforts (i.e., National Wildlife Federation's Community Wildlife Habitat program).

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

new cert MOMS 2025.png

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

AdventHealth volunteer group, City of Ocala Leave it Better, with assistance from Parks Department team.

What program was launched or maintained to complete this effort? (Please include a link to the program, if possible)

In review of the park, this site had both previous NWF certifications and bird habitat certifications. We recertified the butterfly garden and replaced 2 bird houses that were broken. Volunteers spent time learning about different pollinator wildflowers and the tropical milkweed variety and issues that can be caused, along with habitat loss and pesticide use.

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

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and other pollinators.

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

DSC_2031.JPG

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

DSC_2027.JPG

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

DSC_2044.JPG

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

DSC_2061.JPG

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

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

1

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.

Manual removal at Scott Springs Park, Heritage Nature Conservancy, and Fort King National Historic Landmark, which was mostly skunkvine, cesar weed, and air potato, and allowed light to move in. With this, aquatic milkweed species was replanted along the trails and pods collected to start more plantings in the spring 2026!

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