

# City of Decorah

Decorah, IA

Mayor Andy Carlson

## Pledge Summary

The city Decorah, population 7,500, is located along the Upper Iowa River in the Driftless Region of Northeast Iowa. The area is known for its beautiful scenic bluffs, numerous springs and waterfalls, and many acres of public parks and wildlife areas for trout fishing, kayaking, hiking, biking, and simple enjoyment of the natural environment. In 2001, the City, in partnership with numerous organizations and individuals, established a prairie reconstruction to facilitate stream bank protection, and water quality improvement along the Upper Iowa River. A 11.4 acre filter strip was planted with native grasses and forbs, and the following year, a ½ acre butterfly garden and additional 24.1 acre prairie was constructed to protect the floodplain. The butterfly garden and prairie serve as an oasis in town- a place to hike, cross-country ski, a location for students (elementary through college) to study, and an inspiration to local citizens to undertake similar plantings on their own property. Art in the Park, after school programs, Monarch tagging events, seed collection, Luther College Cross Country training, to name a few, are activities that the community enjoys at little to no cost!

## Action Items Committed for 2026

### 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.
- Engage with gardening leaders and partners (e.g., Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, Nature Centers, Native Plant Society Chapters, other long-standing and influential community leaders) to support monarch butterfly conservation.
- Engage with city parks and recreation, public works, sustainability, and other relevant staff to identify opportunities to revise and maintain mowing programs and milkweed / native nectar plant planting programs.

### Systems Change

- Launch, expand, or continue an effort to change municipal planting ordinances and practices to include more native milkweed and native nectar producing plants at city properties.

### Program and Demonstration Gardens

- Plant milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants along roadsides, medians, or public rights-of-way.
- 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.

## Past Pledge Archive

Mayor Name	Program Year	Pledge Date	Achievement
Mayor Andy Carlson	2026	1/22/2026	
Mayor Lorraine Borowski	2025	4/30/2025	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).**

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

**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?**

**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 (e.g., 50).**

**Where is your habitat being created? This may include residences (yards, containers, balconies, etc.), schools, places of worship, rights-of-way, roadsides, community gardens, culturally-significant locations, shared public spaces and common areas or parks.**

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

**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.” (Only allow numerical values.)**

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

## Selected Action Items

**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:**

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

**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.**

**Launch, expand, or continue an effort to change municipal planting ordinances and practices to include more native milkweed and native nectar producing plants at city properties.**

**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.**

**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.**

**Plant milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants along roadsides, medians, or public rights-of-way.**

**What is the total acreage of median and public right-of-way that has been planted with milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants?**

**Please describe the maintenance schedule for these planted areas.**

**Where are the medians, roadsides and public rights-of-way? (Please provide an address or coordinates, if possible, or describe the location)**

**How many milkweed and pollinator-friendly native nectar plants were planted?**

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

**How many people attended your event?**

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

**How many plants were sold and/or given away at your event?**

**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)**

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

**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.**

**Engage with gardening leaders and partners (e.g., Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, Nature Centers, Native Plant Society Chapters , other long-standing and influential community leaders) to support monarch butterfly conservation.**

**Please describe the extent of engagement with these groups and their monarch butterfly conservation efforts.**

**How many community organizations and groups participated? Please list them below.**

**Engage with city parks and recreation, public works, sustainability, and other relevant staff to identify opportunities to revise and maintain mowing programs and milkweed / native nectar plant planting programs.**

**Please describe the extent of engagement with these groups and revisions/maintenance implemented for mowing or planting programs.**

**How many community organizations and groups participated? Please list them below.**