

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 29, 2021

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
Chair
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
And Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Pingree and Ranking Member Joyce:

As you consider the Fiscal Year 2022 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations, we urge you to support robust funding for monarch butterflies and other imperiled pollinator species. While we appreciate the Committee's support for voluntary conservation actions like the historic Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurance (CCAA) that will create habitat for monarchs on energy and transportation lands, Congress must do more to not only prevent the butterfly from further decline but also ensure long-term population stability.

In December 2020, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) announced that the monarch butterfly warrants protection under the Endangered Species Act, but that the agency did not have enough funding to complete its listing. That decision effectively puts the monarch on a waiting list for listing but confers little to no protection in the meantime. Now considered a candidate species, the Service is required to review its status annually until a listing decision is made. Unfortunately, many species on the candidate list have been waiting for protections for decades. In fact, 47 species have gone extinct while waiting for their protection to be finalized.

One of America's most iconic and beloved butterflies, the monarch population has plummeted more than 80% in the past two decades. The loss of milkweed and pollinator habitat is the main driver of this decline. The most recent annual population counts show a decline of 85% for the eastern U.S. population that overwinters in Mexico and a decline of 99.9% for monarchs west of the Rocky Mountains, which overwinter in California. After two years of record-setting lows of 30,000 butterflies, down from 1.2 million just two decades ago, there were only 1,914 monarch butterflies recorded overwintering on the California coast this year—the lowest number ever recorded. Without emergency help, it is almost certain that the western population of monarchs will collapse within a few years. Indeed, their annual migration has *already* collapsed.

For the eastern population of monarchs, there is up to an 80% chance they will collapse within 50 years. Once the populations collapse, they are on a sure path toward extinction. The situation is now dire and urgent help is desperately needed. To ensure the monarch does not become the 48th species to go extinct while on the candidate list, we urge Congress to provide \$50 million per year starting in FY22 for the conservation of monarch butterflies.


Specifically, we request \$25 million in line with the spirit of the Monarch Action, Recovery, and Conservation of Habitat Act of 2021 (“MONARCH” Act). The MONARCH Act provides emergency funds to pull western monarch butterflies back from the brink of extinction. It provides \$12.5 million per year to support on-the-ground conservation projects approved by the Secretary of Interior to stabilize and recover western monarchs. It also provides \$12.5 million per year to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to implement the existing Western Monarch Butterfly Conservation Plan.

We request an additional \$25 million to support broader efforts to conserve monarchs and other imperiled pollinators. This level of funding would cover the cost of restoring 250,000 acres of milkweed and pollinator habitat per year so that the butterfly is resilient to threats from habitat loss, pesticides, severe weather, and climate change. Milkweed has nearly been eradicated from areas of the Midwest where monarchs are typically born. Reversing this trend by actively restoring milkweed and other pollinator habitat is critical to ensure the long-term survival of the monarch butterfly.

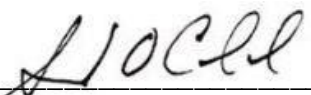
Climate change is also undermining the stable weather conditions and predictable flowering seasons that monarchs need to complete their migration. Climate change also threatens these butterflies’ overwintering habitat in the mountain forests of Mexico. It is now expected that the International Monarch Biosphere Reserve in Mexico is expected to become climatically unsuitable for monarchs by the end of the century.

Without substantial investment in and attention to the monarch’s conservation, one storm or climate event during its winter in Mexico or California could result in migratory collapse. Dedicating \$50 million per year to monarch conservation gives these butterflies a fighting chance at survival.

Sincerely,



Jimmy Panetta
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Thomas R. Suozzi
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

_____/s/_____
Nanette Diaz Barragán
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

_____/s/_____
William R. Keating
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_____/s/_____
Sara Jacobs
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

_____/s/_____
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson
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_____/s/_____
Earl Blumenauer
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_____/s/_____
Katie Porter
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_____/s/_____
Haley Stevens
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Ro Khanna
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James P. McGovern
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Albio Sires
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Jamie Raskin
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Jerry McNerney
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_____/s/_____
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Marc Veasy
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Jahana Hayes
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