

Annual Performance Report

Project Number: T-117-R-1

Project Title: Coordinating Strategy Development and Habitat Enhancement for Monarch Butterfly, a Focal Species of the Farmland and Prairie Campaign

Reporting Period: October 1, 2017 – September 30, 2020

Due Date: December 16, 2020

Grantee: University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC)

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Objectives and Description of Activities:

Below is a summary of the objectives of the project and description of related activities during the reporting period:

1. Compile the Illinois' state summary for the Mid-America Monarch Butterfly Conservation Strategy.
 - 1.1 Provide guidance and technical support to sector groups for conservation strategies and action planning within urban, agriculture, natural lands, and rights-of-way sectors.

UIC worked with sector leaders to compile relevant information for the state summary, provide comments on draft versions of the Mid-America Monarch Butterfly Conservation Strategy, and incorporate feedback in preparation for the final draft. The work was primarily performed through facilitated discussion at monthly sector leader meetings, individual communications with sector leaders, and review of other state summaries.
 - 1.2 Submit a first draft to IDNR by December 31, 2017 and a final draft by February 28, 2018.

In coordination with IDNR, a first draft of the state summary was submitted to the Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA) on December 2, 2017. A second draft was submitted to MAFWA on January 19, 2018. A final draft was submitted to MAFWA on June 15, 2018. The schedule for submission of the final draft was shifted based on MAFWA's public comment process. The final draft took into consideration comments received during the public comment period and incorporated other feedback from MAFWA and Illinois sector leaders. The final Mid-America Monarch Butterfly Conservation Strategy was published by MAFWA on July 6, 2018.
2. Organize second Illinois Monarch Butterfly Summit to seek input and build collaboration on statewide strategy.
 - 2.1 Host summit by December 31, 2018.

The Technical Steering Committee (sector leaders) recommended that we delay the second Illinois Monarch Butterfly Summit until the completion of the Illinois Monarch Project Action

Plan, in order to maximize engagement and utilize the summit to kick-off implementation activities associated with the plan. The summit was originally planned for May 2020 but was postponed and reimaged due to COVID-19 restrictions.

A virtual signing ceremony was held on September 24, 2020 during which the Action Plan was officially signed by the four state agencies: Illinois Department of Agriculture, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Department of Transportation and Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. During the reporting period, the Technical Steering Committee also laid out plans for a series of five virtual events between October 2020 and May 2021 in place of an in-person summit.

- 2.2 Engage at least 75 diverse stakeholders from across Illinois and with representation from all sectors.

Leading up to the signing ceremony, partners from all four sectors participated in outreach and promotion of the Action Plan. The signing ceremony was broadcast over Facebook Live and 544 people registered to attend. The video from the signing ceremony has been viewed more than 4,300 times.

The virtual summit series is expected to continue to engage diverse stakeholders from each sector group through 2021.

3. Prepare an Illinois Monarch Project Action Plan that will include sector-specific information and strategies to meet Illinois' habitat targets.

- 3.1 Provide guidance and technical support to sector groups for action planning and implementation strategies within urban, agriculture, natural lands, and rights-of-way sectors.

UIC contracted with the Institute of Conservation Leadership (ICL) to support strategy development through the use of templates and structured solicitation. Monthly Technical Steering Committee meetings were used to refine strategies and actions. Additional support was provided to the urban, natural lands, and rights-of-way sector groups, including facilitated conference calls and in-person meetings to engage key sector stakeholders.

UIC worked with sector leaders to restructure and refine objectives, strategies, and actions over the course of several months. This involved several iterations of feedback to incorporate recommendations from each sector group. This work was primarily done through monthly Technical Steering Committee meetings.

UIC hired a graduate student to assist in the design and compilation of the Action Plan, including developing draft layouts, preparing text, and refining objectives and strategies. UIC worked with sector groups and the Technical Steering Committee on several iterations of review and feedback on the Action Plan drafts.

UIC hosted an online peer review solicitation in March 2020 to gather feedback on the draft Action Plan from a broader pool of stakeholders. Thirty-one respondents provided

comments. UIC worked with sector leaders to refine the draft Action Plan based on comments received from the peer review.

In addition, throughout the project period, UIC worked with the Technical Steering Committee to refine the mission and vision of the Illinois Monarch Project. UIC assisted sector leaders and committee chairs with committee formation, namely the formation of the Science Committee, Communications Engagement Outreach Committee, Route 66 Corridor Initiative, and Informational Packets. Through the Science Committee, UIC supported the development of statewide mowing guidelines, which were published in June 2019.

UIC also launched a dedicated website for Illinois Monarch Project to provide technical resources by sector to stakeholders across Illinois. See <http://illinoismonarchproject.org/>.

- 3.2 Submit a first draft to IDNR by August 31, 2019 and a final draft by October 31, 2019. *During the project period, the monarch butterfly listing determination was delayed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) until December 2020. Based on this and continued work and coordination with the Technical Steering Committee, the timeline for completing the Action Plan was postponed to allow additional time for strategy development and to focus attention on coordinating data submission to the USFWS Monarch Conservation Database.*

UIC provided several iterations of draft Action Plans to IDNR during the October 2019 – May 2020 period. UIC submitted the final draft Action Plan to IDNR for agency review on May 27, 2020. UIC responded to feedback by Illinois Department of Agriculture and Illinois Department of Transportation and incorporated minimal edits after that date. The Action Plan was signed by the state agency directors on September 24, 2020.

- 3.3 Investigate at least two potential tracking mechanisms for documenting progress on actions identified in the Illinois Monarch Project Action Plan. *UIC coordinated data uploads to the USFWS Monarch Conservation Database in November 2018 and May 2020. The bulk uploads included multiple efforts from the agriculture, natural lands, and rights-of-way sectors.*

UIC also created an online Illinois Monarch Project Pledge for individuals and organizations that launched on the website in May 2020. The pledge drew more than 200 respondents between May and September 2020. Respondents committed to one or more actions on the pledge form and provided estimates of milkweed stems and area of new or managed habitat.

Further exploration of long-term tracking mechanisms for monitoring progress towards the 150 million milkweed stem target is anticipated during the early implementation planning stage.

4. Provide a primary point of contact and coordination for the Illinois Monarch Project and related activities in the state.

4.1 Convene approximately 20 sector leader meetings between October 1, 2017 and September 30, 2020.

UIC hosted a total of 36 sector leader meetings during the reporting period:

<i>October 13, 2017</i>	<i>May 10, 2019</i>
<i>November 7, 2017</i>	<i>June 14, 2019 (via web)</i>
<i>December 12, 2017</i>	<i>July 12, 2019</i>
<i>January 16, 2018 (via web)</i>	<i>August 9, 2019 (via web)</i>
<i>February 16, 2018</i>	<i>September 13, 2019 (via web)</i>
<i>March 22, 2018 (via web);</i>	<i>October 25, 2019</i>
<i>April 18, 2018</i>	<i>November 8, 2019 (via web)</i>
<i>May 11, 2018</i>	<i>November 25, 2019 (via web)</i>
<i>June 8, 2018</i>	<i>December 12, 2019 (via web)</i>
<i>August 2, 2018 (via web)</i>	<i>January 17, 2020 (via web)</i>
<i>September 14, 2018 (via web)</i>	<i>February 5, 2020 (via web)</i>
<i>October 12, 2018 (via web)</i>	<i>March 6, 2020</i>
<i>November 9, 2018</i>	<i>April 9, 2020 (via web)</i>
<i>December 14, 2018 (via web)</i>	<i>May 8, 2020 (via web)</i>
<i>January 11, 2019 (via web)</i>	<i>June 12, 2020 (via web)</i>
<i>February 8, 2019</i>	<i>July 10, 2020 (via web)</i>
<i>March 8, 2019 (via web)</i>	<i>August 14, 2020 (via web)</i>
<i>April 19, 2019</i>	<i>September 17, 2020 (via web)</i>

Actions items and meeting minutes were compiled post-meeting and shared with sector leaders. The Technical Steering Committee meetings served as the primary platform for coordination among sector leaders, including discussion and development of the state summary, Illinois Monarch Project charter, Illinois Monarch Project Action Plan, revisions to the organizational structure, committee updates and coordination, and regulatory updates.

4.2 Manage communications with Illinois Monarch Project leadership team and general stakeholders.

Email and committee meetings were the primary forms of communication between UIC, sector leaders, and other stakeholders. Primary communications with the leadership team focused on gathering input and feedback on the MAFWA state summary, Illinois Monarch Action Plan development, event planning, and project coordination. A shared Google Drive also provided a platform for collaborative coordination and tracking.

Throughout the project period, UIC fielded question and requests and engaged with new interested stakeholder groups to integrate them into relevant conversations, committees, and sector groups to support ongoing work. One specific example was coordinating with Pollinator Partnership and the DuPage Monarch Project on a proclamation with the Illinois Governor's office for Pollinator Week in June 2020. The proclamation recognized June 22 – 28 as Illinois Pollinator Week and urged all residents to recognize the observance.

The launch of the Illinois Monarch Project website and social media accounts in May and June 2020, respectively, provided new avenues to reach a broader range of stakeholders. Also in 2020, UIC worked to re-engage the Communications Engagement and Outreach Committee ahead of the roll out of the Action Plan. New committee members were recruited to support sectors and committee chairs. The committee developed communications toolkits for social media leading up to the Action Plan signing ceremony and the virtual summit.

4.3 Represent Illinois Monarch Project at state and regional venues.

UIC represented Illinois Monarch Project at several state and regional meetings, including:

- Iris Caldwell served on the Mid-America Monarch Conservation Strategy work team for the Rights-of-Way sector, working with stakeholders to develop strategies specific to roadside and railroad rights-of-way. UIC also coordinated among the other sector leaders who served on sector-based work teams.*
- 2018 Vital Lands Summit on January 30, 2018.*
- Illinois Farm Bureau Governmental Affairs & Leadership Conference on March 15, 2018.*
- 2018 Innovations in Construction, Asphalt & Transportation Conference on April 11, 2018*
- Monarch Joint Venture / MAFWA Annual Meeting on November 29 – 30, 2018*
- Illinois Farm Bureau Annual Meeting on December 2, 2018*
- Pheasant Fest and Quail Classic in Schaumburg, Illinois on February 22, 2019*
- MAFWA Mid-America States Technical Workshop on August 6 – 7, 2019*
- UIC also coordinated with Illinois Monarch Project partners to present to other statewide meetings, including the Illinois Park and Recreation Association and the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents meetings.*
- Urban Monarch Conservation Workshop hosted by the Field Museum in Chicago, IL on November 22, 2019.*
- Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago Board of Commissioners meeting on February 6, 2020 during which UIC received a proclamation on behalf of the Illinois Monarch Project.*

5. Pursue at least two grant applications during the grant period to support the continuation or implementation of work identified in objectives 1 through 4 or as identified by the Illinois Monarch Project leadership team.

During the reporting period, UIC prepared a grant application to the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation to create a detailed roadmap for the implementation of pollinator habitat on utility and transportation rights-of-way across the Chicago Region. The roadmap will identify partners interested in working on habitat projects on energy and transportation lands, identify barriers and opportunities, and summarize findings in a final report. UIC was awarded the funding in July 2020 and will complete the work between August 2020 and March 2021.

UIC secured several funding commitments from Illinois Corn Growers during the reporting period to support the development of the Illinois Monarch Project website and outreach materials related to the Action Plan.

UIC and IDNR also began evaluating future State Wildlife Grant opportunities and other state funding to support Illinois Monarch Project during the Action Plan implementation phase; however, there was not sufficient time to prepare a formal grant application during the project period.

Other Updates:

No other changes besides those identified above have impacted the grant approach, schedule, or budget during the reporting period.