

Exhibit K - Monarch Butterfly Habitat Development Project

Name and Acronym: Monarch Butterfly Habitat Development Project (MBHP)

Description/Summary:

The monarch has suffered from significant population declines over the past two decades. Through Farm Bill conservation programs and technical assistance, NRCS will work with partners and clients to increase monarch habitat on private lands. While the monarch butterfly occurs in 49 different States, NRCS is targeting the effort to the core migration route and the primary breeding range. The Monarch Butterfly Habitat Development Project document was developed and distributed within NRCS in 2015 and provides the foundation for the targeting of financial assistance. In the Midwest, the effort is focused on plantings of milkweed (*Asclepias* spp.) and monarch nectaring forbs in wetlands and other marginal lands. In the southern Great Plains, the effort is focused on improving monarch habitat on existing grasslands.

Required Use of Identified Priority Feature in Toolkit

This guidance identifies core and supporting practices that may be planned and implemented consistent with the Monarch Butterfly Habitat Development Project strategy document. Conservation planners should use the identified priority tool in Toolkit and select “Monarch” for any practice that is planned consistent with the Monarch Habitat Strategy. This will allow NRCS to track all conservation practices planned and implemented for the benefit of monarch butterflies regardless of financial assistance. Instructions for using the “Identified Priority” feature in Toolkit are located in the Toolkit user guides.

Approved Focus Area and Participating States:

Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, and Wisconsin

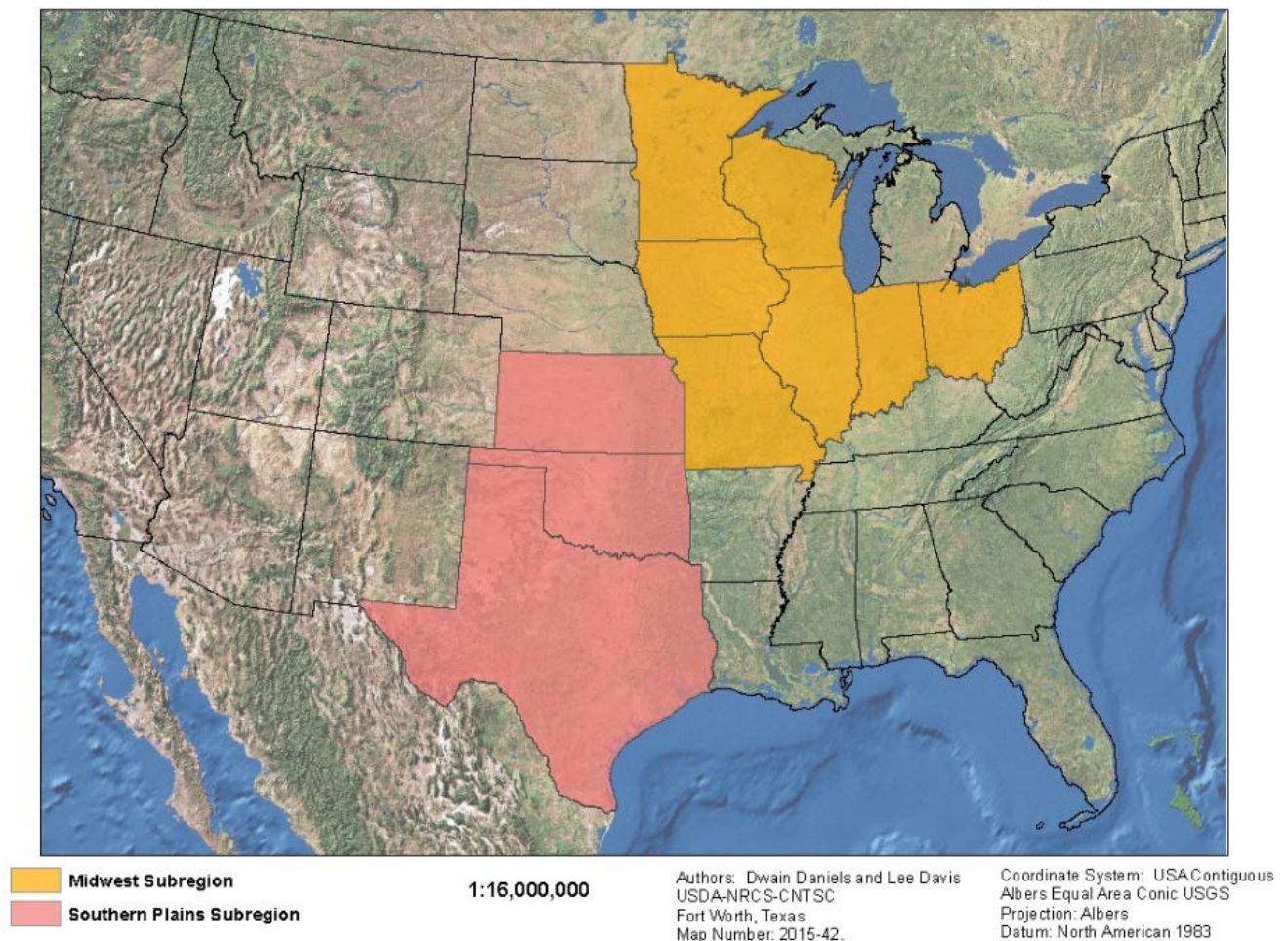


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ProTracts Requirements:

Subaccount Guidance:

440-CPM, Part 512, Subpart I, Section 512.83, requires that separate fund accounts be established for all programs and initiatives administered in ProTracts. States must select the correct monarch account type from the choices in ProTracts to provide for consistent analysis and the ability to track program delivery. Subaccounts will be created in ProTracts to support the Monarch Butterfly Habitat Project for each State approved in the focal area.

1. **Subaccount Guidance:**

440-CPM, Part 512, Subpart I, Section 512.83, requires that separate fund accounts be established for all programs and initiatives administered in ProTracts. States must select the Monarch account type from the choices in ProTracts to provide for consistent analysis and the ability to track program delivery. Monarch subaccounts will be created in ProTracts for each approved State.

ACCOUNT TYPE
EQIP 2014
Monarch Butterfly Project

2. **Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool Guidance – Choice Lists and Matrix Data:**

- a. Approved Land Types.—States must assign the following land uses that apply as eligible for Monarch in the ProTracts Application Evaluation and Ranking Tool (AERT) ranking process:

Land Use Type
Crop
Farmsteads
Pasture
Range
Associated Agriculture Lands

- b. States must assign natural resource concerns from the following list for WLFW in ProTracts AERT:

Fish and Wildlife
Habitat Degradation
Degraded Plant Condition
Undesirable Plant Productivity and Health
Excessive Plant Pest Pressure
Inadequate structure and composition
Livestock Production Limitation
Inadequate Feed and Forage
Inadequate Livestock Water

Note: No additional resource concerns may be added or used in ProTracts AERT to support the Monarch Project.

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MIDWEST SUBREGION

Monarch Midwest Subregion Core and Supporting National Conservation Practices

All monarch habitat development efforts will be planned under the umbrella practice of Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645). In accordance with practice 645, the monarch butterfly will be the “*targeted wildlife species*,” and the criteria that a “*habitat evaluation or appraisal will be used*” will be met by the application of the Monarch Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG), Midwest Version. If the client chooses to implement the plan with the use of Farm Bill programs, the following are the core and supporting practices to be used in the contracting effort. Refer to the WHEG and other supporting documents for more guidance on how to plan and implement monarch habitat using these core and supporting practices.

Core National Conservation Practices:

- Brush Management (314)
- Conservation Cover (327)
- Early Successional Habitat Development/Management (647)
- Field Border (386)
- Forage Harvest Management (511)
- Prescribed Burning (338)
- Riparian Herbaceous Cover (390)
- Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645)

Supporting National Conservation Practices:

- Fence (382)
- Fire Break (394)
- Herbaceous Weed Control (315)
- Integrated Pest Management (595)
- Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management (644)

Screening Criteria (states may add additional screening criteria as desired):

Screening Question 1:

Is the project area located in a county identified in red on the “Monarch Focal Area FY 2016 Screening Tool” map?

Yes (High) No (Low)

Monarch Focal Area FY 2016 Screening Tool

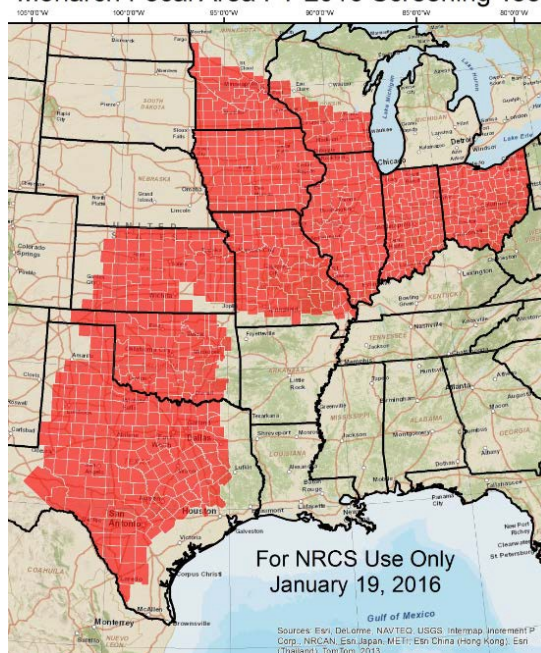


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Screening Question 2:

Are any of the planned monarch habitats located adjacent to (i) cropland field, or (ii) pasture or hayland that is treated with insecticides (excluding treated seed)?

NO High

YES, continue

- If treated land is located on only one side of the planting, is the habitat width greater than 125 feet?
 - o Yes (High)
 - o No (Low)
- If treated land is located on more than both sides of the planting, is the habitat width more than 250 feet?
 - o Yes (High)
 - o No (Low)

Ranking Criteria:

National Questions developed by Programs Division (250 points total) and preloaded into ProTracts.

State Questions (to be used for the regional Monarch Butterfly Habitat Development Project; 400 points total):

1. Based on the NRCS "Midwest Butterfly Habitat Ranking Index" map, the project area is located in the following priority areas-(select only one):
 - a. High (highest priority per the map) 150 points
 - b. Medium (2nd highest priority) 50 points
 - c. Low (3rd highest priority) 25 points

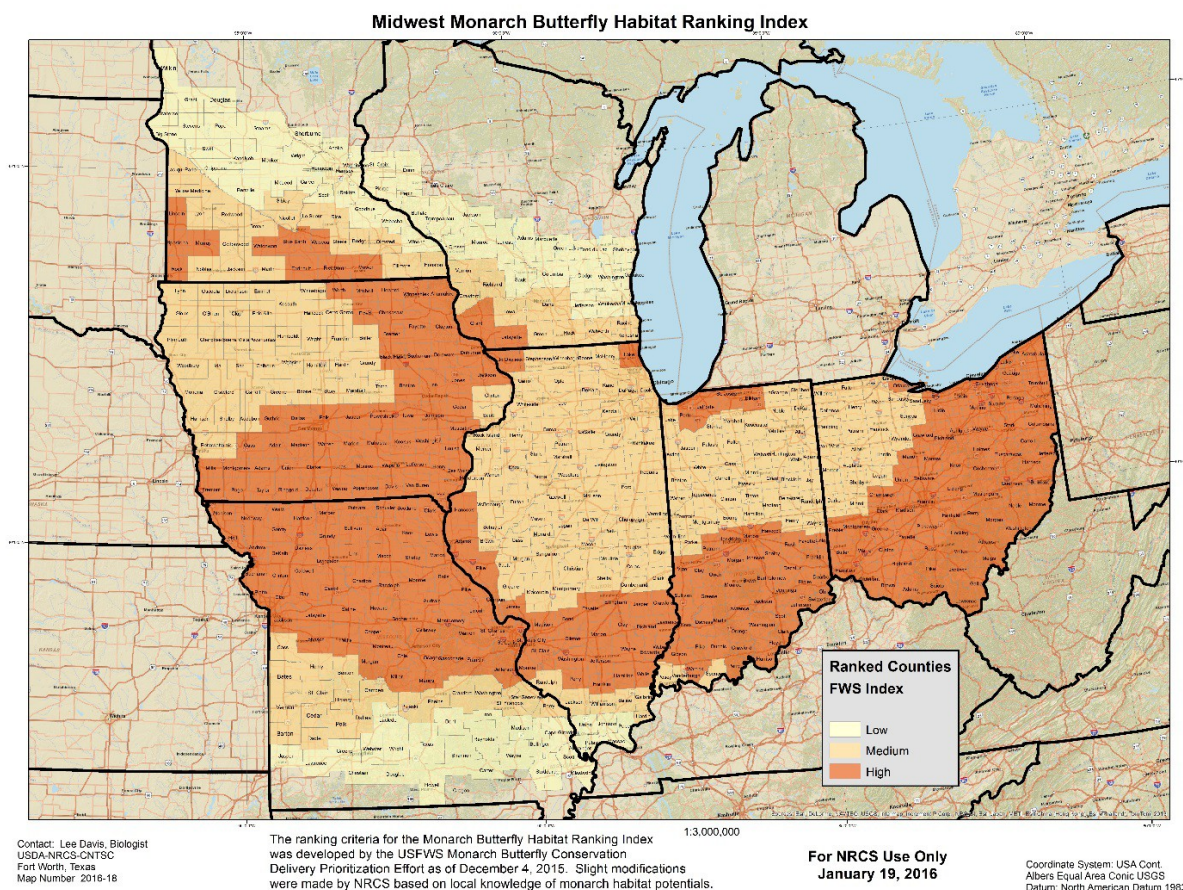


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2. National conservation practices in the project area include:
 - a. Planting mix includes two or more species of milkweed (*Asclepias* spp) 150 points
 - b. Planting mix includes one species of milkweed 50 points
 - c. Management of existing habitat will increase existing milkweed and floral resources 25 points
3. Proximity to existing monarch habitat (i.e., natural areas¹, CRP, prairies, or protected easements). Select only one:
 - a. Protected areas are located immediately adjacent to project area 100 points
 - b. Protected areas are located within 0.5 miles of project area 50 points
 - c. Nonprotected natural area is within 0.5 miles of project area 25 points

¹ Natural areas include grasslands and native herbaceous wetlands (noncropped) that support at least 50 percent native herbaceous species. Protected areas include conservation easements, government lands, and similarly protected areas.

Local Questions (to be developed by each State, using the following guidance; 250 points total):

- NRCS State offices should work with their State Technical committee to develop criteria to determine potential conservation opportunity of offered area. This will take into consideration existing habitat conditions and the degree to which conservation practices will improve or maintain habitat for the species. Examples include:
 - o Soil type, elevation, vegetation type and condition, hydrology, canopy cover, forest cover in surrounding areas, invasive species issues, etc.
 - o Practices most beneficial to the target species.
 - o Proximity to known populations nearby where the habitat is actively managed (e.g. national wildlife refuge, State wildlife management area, State park, nature preserve, and private landowners).
- Parcel location should be given priority where it contributes to habitat connectivity or expanse relative to species needs.
- Additional state/local questions can also be included as desired.

SOUTHERN GREAT PLAINS SUBREGION

Monarch Southern Great Plains Subregion Core and Supporting National Conservation Practices

All monarch habitat development efforts will be planned under the umbrella practice of Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645). In following practice 645, the monarch butterfly will be the “*targeted wildlife species*,” and the criteria that a “*habitat evaluation or appraisal will be used*” will be met by the application of the Monarch Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG), Southern Great Plains Version. If the client chooses to implement the plan with the use of Farm Bill programs, the following are the core and supporting practices to be used in the contracting effort. Refer to the WHEG for more guidance on how to plan and implement monarch habitat using these core and supporting practices.

Core National Conservation Practices:

- Brush Management (314)
- Conservation Cover (327)
- Early Successional Habitat Development/Management (647)
- Field Border (386)
- Forage Harvest Management (511)
- Prescribed Burning (338)
- Prescribed Grazing (528)
- Range Planting (550)
- Riparian Herbaceous Cover (390)
- Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645)

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Supporting National Conservation Practices:

- Fence (382)
- Fire Break (394)
- Heavy Use Area Protection (561)
- Herbaceous Weed Control (315)
- Integrated Pest Management (595)
- Livestock Pipeline (516)
- Pond (378)
- Pumping Plant (533)
- Water Well (642)
- Watering Facility (614)
- Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management (644)

Screening Criteria (states may add additional screening criteria as needed):

Screening Question 1:

Is the project area located in a county identified in red on the “Monarch Focal Area FY 2016 Screening Tool” map?

Yes (High)

No (Low)

Monarch Focal Area FY 2016 Screening Tool

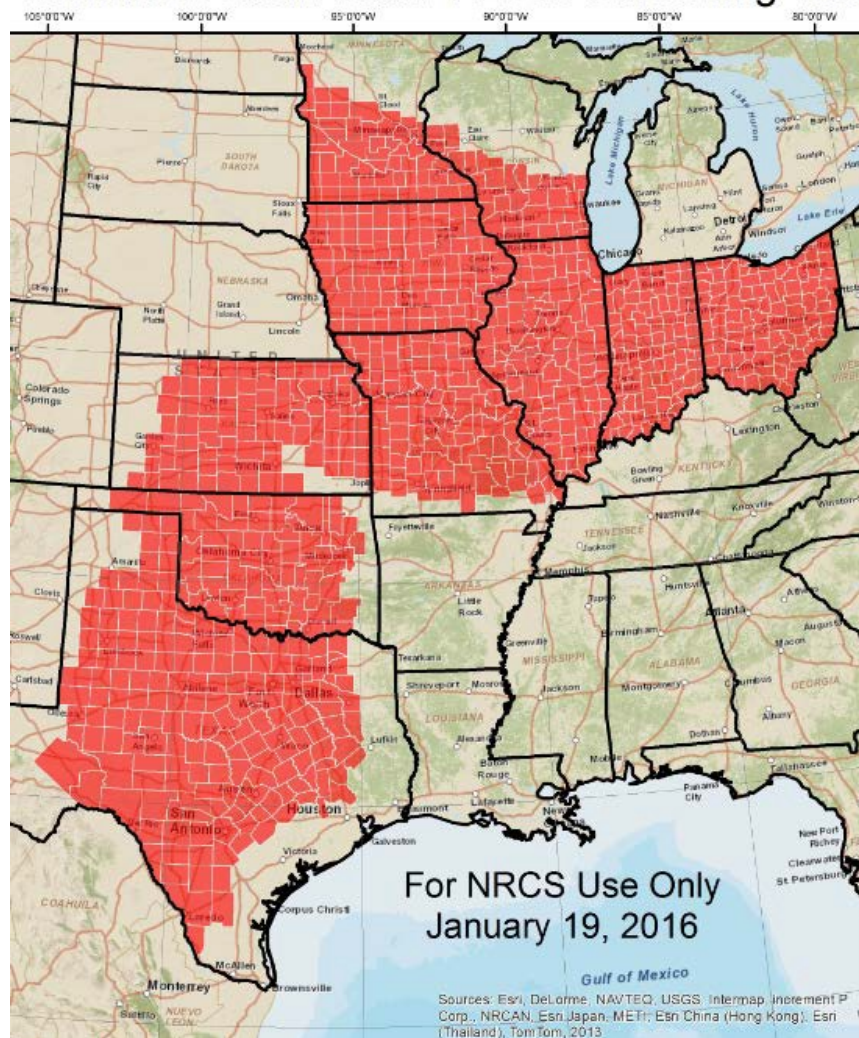


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Ranking Criteria:

National Questions developed by Programs Division (250 points total) and preloaded into ProTracts.

State Questions (to be used for the regional Monarch Butterfly Habitat Development Project; 400 points total):

1. Does the applicant agree to implement management and/or restoration to increase the availability of monarch nectaring plants late in the growing season, by using National Conservation Practices 338, 390, 528, 550, 645, or 647?
 - a. Yes (200 pts)
 - b. No (0 pts)
2. Vegetative diversity (select the one that applies that has the highest score)
 - a. Is the current or planned land cover of offered acres predominately (>75 percent) native herbaceous vegetation? (200 pts)
 - b. Is the current or planned land cover of offered acres predominately (50-75 percent) native vegetation? (150 pts)

Is the current or planned land cover of offered acres predominately (25-50 percent) native vegetation? (50 pts)

Local Questions (to be developed by each State, using the following guidance; 250 points total):

- NRCS State offices will work with their State Technical committee to develop criteria to determine potential conservation opportunity of offered area. This will take into consideration existing habitat conditions and the degree to which conservation practices will improve or maintain habitat for the species. Examples include—
 - o Soil type, elevation, vegetation type and condition, hydrology, canopy cover, forest cover in surrounding areas, invasive species issues, etc.
 - o Practices most beneficial to the target species.
 - o Proximity to known populations nearby where the habitat is actively managed (e.g., national wildlife refuge, State wildlife management area, State park, nature preserve, and private landowners).
- Parcel location should be given priority where it contributes to habitat connectivity or expanse relative to species needs.
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