

CITY OF PALM DESERT STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: May 9, 2024

PREPARED BY: Shawn Muir, Community Services Manager

REQUEST: RESOLUTION FOR THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION'S
MAYORS' MONARCH PLEDGE TO RENEW THE CITY'S EFFORTS TO
PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE POLLINATOR POPULATION

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Adopt a Resolution entitled "A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA, AUTHORIZING THE CITY TO ENTER INTO THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION MAYORS' MONARCH PLEDGE."
2. Authorize staff to work in collaboration with the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens and University of California, Riverside (UCR) Palm Desert Center to carry out the three specific actions listed below within the next year:
 - a. Issue a Proclamation to raise awareness about the decline of the monarch butterfly and the species' need for habitat.
 - b. Increase the area of pollinator-friendly demonstration garden at Civic Center Park.
 - c. Support milkweed propagation by planting milkweed at various City parks and medians, where advisable.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

The monarch butterfly is known for the migration it makes every year from Canada and the eastern, central, and western United States to the central mountains of Mexico. Palm Desert is on the west coast flyway for monarchs heading to and from Mexico. Unfortunately, the monarch butterfly is disappearing, and scientists indicate that the population has declined by 90% over the last twenty years.

Like all butterflies, monarchs lay their eggs on select plants, called "host plants", the only plants their caterpillars can eat. For monarchs in Palm Desert, desert milkweed (*Asclepias subulata*) is the host plant. Studies show that milkweed across the United States declined by 58% from 1999 to 2010, which has critically affected the monarch population.

The City has partnered with The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens since 2021 to create public awareness and increase the number of monarch butterflies in Palm Desert and the Coachella Valley. Increasing the number of monarchs in the Coachella Valley is important because they are significant pollinators for local fruit, nut, and vegetable growers.

After staff were authorized to collaborate with The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens on the Pledge in 2021 a monarch butterfly mural was installed within the City, a pollinator garden with directional signage and QR code directing residents to native planting resources was established in Civic Center Park, and milkweed planting began in various landscaped areas throughout the City.

These pledged actions have made significant progress and additional actions are planned for 2024, including the expansion of the pollinator garden in Civic Center Park, addition of a bench with pollinator-themed art, and continuing to include milkweed in City landscape plans.

Upon completion of all items, the City will be asked to submit a simple reporting form regarding the action measures taken on an annual basis. This information will be used by the National Wildlife Federation to track the collective outcomes and impacts of this action.

Staff will continue to explore ways to implement additional pledge actions alongside community partners to create awareness and appreciation for monarch butterfly habitats should the City Council approve entering into this pledge once again.

Action Items Committed for 2024

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.
- Create a community art project to enhance and promote monarch and pollinator conservation as well as cultural awareness and recognition.

Program and Demonstration Gardens▶

- Plant or maintain a monarch and pollinator-friendly demonstration garden at City Hall or another prominent or culturally significant community location.

Legal Review:

This report has been reviewed by the City Attorney's office.

Strategic Plan:

The Mayors' Monarch Pledge and associated projects foster a partnership with The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens and UCR Palm Desert Center to create areas within the City dedicated to conservation of pollinator species. This concept aligns with Priority 2 of the Strategic Plan which focuses on innovative ideas to provide recreation to the community through creative collaboration with partner agencies. The Strategic Plan also points out that art and culture drive economic growth in the City which supports the installation of the monarch mural.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The annual maintenance cost for the pollinator garden is included in the Civic Center Park Landscape Maintenance Contract (LMA 17) under Account No. 1104610-4332001.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution
2. Exhibit A
3. Site Map