

Questions, Comments and Responses

## ENV 3: Nationwide Monarch Butterfly Candidate Conservation Agreement (CCAA) for Energy and Transportation lands

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## Q1. Why is this important?

## A1. The Monarch Butterfly is proposed for listing on the federal threatened and endangered species list. There populations are being limited by habitat loss. Much of the highway system has available land that has milkweed and other nectar producing plants that are beneficial for the monarch and other pollinator species. Conservation practices laid out into this agreement will hopefully benefit the Monarch butterfly.

## A CCAA can help:

##  o Regulatory certainty by giving assurances that no additional requirements will be requested by USFWS.

## o Positive public perception as a voluntary mechanism by which your organization is collaborating with USFWS to conserve a species in need.

## o Avoid costly delays and response to last minute disruptions to construction and maintenance activities by new species listing requirements.

## Q2. What is done with the data collected during the monitoring, is it relatively available?

## A2. VTrans collects data on 30 sampling sites. The data is stored in ARCGIS online database. Data is collected on pollinator species observed (general), nectar producing plants, habitat, abundance of milkweed, threats, and opportunities. I believe the data is available to the public.

## Q3. What is considered suitable habitat for monarchs in the Agreement?

## A3. For the purposes of this Agreement, suitable habitat for monarchs consists of lands that provide either milkweed or potentially flowering nectar plants that may support monarch breeding or foraging needs at times of the year when monarchs are present. The presence of suitable habitat is verified through the sampling conducted via effectiveness monitoring, which validates the presence of baseline expectations for milkweed presence or minimum expected cover for potentially flowering nectar plants.