

## UI Extension helps to protect pollinators in Mountain Home, Idaho

### AT A GLANCE

Environmental policies are a start for recognizing the importance of pollinators in our ecosystem, passing legislation results in an increase in the awareness of our pollinator species throughout the community.

### The Situation

Numerous scientists, ecologists and entomologists around the world have been documenting the dramatic decline of very important pollinator insect species in the ecosystem. Much of the focus in the past has been on bee declines though more recently other important species are being examined in further detail. Bees have been diligently studied for reasons why Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) may occur. The factors contributing to such a decline in the European honeybee, *Apis mellifera* L., colonies have been suggested to include pesticides, poor nutrition, habitat loss, climate change, natural enemies, parasites and a suite of pathogens.

Species such as the monarch butterfly, *Danaus plexippus* L., are seeing significant population declines in their overwintering habitat of southern California and Mexico. Through volunteer efforts put forth by the Xerces Society — an invertebrate conservation nonprofit aimed at protecting our natural world through initiatives and education. Bees are known for their pollination services and contribute to 1/3 of all human food. Monarchs are among the most well-known beloved butterfly species; they are also recognized as Idaho's state insect (officially adopted in 1992).



Brad Stokes and Betsy Lynn show off the Monarch City USA street signs in Mountain Home, Idaho. Photo: Lauren Anderson.

### Our Response

In the spring of 2018 Brad Stokes was approached by the mayor of Mountain Home, Rich Sykes, about concerned citizen complaints about bees foraging in their backyard. After educating the specific citizens about the importance of bees in the ecosystem it was suggested that presenting a resolution would be a warranted step forward for the City of Mountain Home in order to inform and educate all the citizens within city limits. In the summer of 2018 and in the spring of 2019 two other resolutions were presented concerning the protection of pollinators in Mountain Home.

## Program Outcomes

The UI Extension office in Elmore County researched the specific options concerning the protection of pollinator species with regard to resolutions and partnerships with non-profit organizations in the United States. A prominent non-profit organization concerned with protecting bees was identified quickly, Bee City USA. A template resolution was available on their website at <https://www.beecityusa.org>, it was edited by Brad Stokes to specific interests of the City of Mountain Home. On March 12, 2018 the edited resolution (Resolution No. 08-18) was unanimously passed by the City of Mountain Home City Council, signed by the mayor and city clerk thus making Mountain Home an official partner with the non-profit organization Bee City USA (now affiliated with The Xerces Society).

To further protect our pollinator species, a Pollinator Protection Policy resolution was again adapted for the City of Mountain Home. The Pollinator Protection Policy (Resolution No. 30-18) was passed by the City of Mountain Home City Council on May 27, 2018, adopting an official policy aimed at protecting pollinators regarding the recognition and importance of pollinators, bees, butterflies, other insects, specific pesticide policies (neonicotinoids) and adopting integrated pest management strategies.

In the latest effort to enhance pollinator protection programs in the City of Mountain Home, UI Extension educator for Elmore County led the efforts to join another non-profit organization, Monarch City USA. On July 8, 2019 the city council adopted the resolution (Resolution No. 24-19) to make Mountain Home an official affiliate of Monarch City USA.

Two sets of street signs have been placed within the City of Mountain Home limits, these signs are placed on highly traveled routes to the downtown corridor which include American Legion Boulevard and Highway 30. Both sets of signs highlight the affiliation of the City of Mountain Home with Tree City, Bee City

and Monarch City USA, a big step forward in the protection of our environment and pollinators.

## The Future

As important pollinator species are identified as being threatened by scientists/ecologist/entomologists around the world, official policies by government entities (federal/state/county/city) need to be examined to further protect our valuable and highly important environmental species.

## Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

Collaboration between the City of Mountain Home, Parks and Recreation Department, Bee City USA, Monarch City USA, Xerces Society and Elmore County's UI Extension office made these efforts possible.



Rich Sykes, Brad Stokes and Tiffany Belt stand next to one of the visible street signs. Mountain Home is a member of Tree City, Bee City and Monarch City USA. Photo: Betsy Lynn.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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