

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 4, 2021

Principal Deputy Director Martha Williams
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

Deputy Director Williams:

We write to urge you to expeditiously dedicate U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service resources to pollinator conservation and habitat restoration. We appreciate the recent monarch butterfly status review conducted by the Service that concluded the species meets the definition of either endangered or threatened, but that funding prevents the paperwork required to complete its listing. The agency's decision to forego listing the monarch under the Endangered Species Act is inconsistent with recent administration of the Act under which the agency has avoided almost all candidate listings in recent years. The decision to delay protections for at least another year could be the final shove that pushes the western monarch butterfly to extinction. We appreciate that on January 20th, the Biden Administration already flagged this rule as one it is putting under review.

On December 17, 2020, the Service announced that listing the monarch as endangered or threatened was warranted but precluded by higher priority listing actions. We are particularly concerned with the Service's decision because many species on the candidate list have been waiting for protection for decades. In fact, 47 species have gone extinct while waiting for their protection to be finalized.

One of America's most iconic pollinators, the monarch butterfly has been trending toward extinction. This essential pollinator faces growing threats from the loss of milkweed and habitat, global climate change, and disease. The most recent annual population counts show a decline of 85% for the eastern U.S. population that overwinters in Mexico and a decline of 99.9% for monarchs west of the Rocky Mountains, which overwinter in California. After two years of reaching record-setting lows of 30,000 butterflies, down from 1.2 million just two decades ago, the most recent numbers show that only 1,914 monarch butterflies were recorded overwintering on the California coast this year. In the summer of 2020, several western states, including Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, and Nevada, had very few butterflies each.

The decision to delay protecting the monarch is especially alarming given that both the eastern and western populations are well below the extinction thresholds at which government scientists estimate the migrations could collapse. The Service itself has estimated up to an 80% probability

of population collapse for eastern monarchs within 50 years and a 96-100% probability for the western population. If urgent action isn't taken immediately to address the myriad of threats the butterfly faces, western monarchs could disappear in just a few short years.

Without substantial investment in and attention to the monarch's conservation, one storm or climate event during its winter in Mexico could result in migratory collapse. We recommend that the Service invest in science and analysis to determine the most important causes of the decline of the western population, especially on its wintering grounds. In addition, if the monarchs' precipitous decline continues, we recommend that the Service consider use of its emergency listing procedures. To ensure the monarch does not become the 48th species to go extinct while on the candidate list, we again urge the Service to make substantial investments in bold conservation actions that not only prevent the butterfly from further decline but also ensure long-term population stability.

Sincerely,

/s/ Salud O. Carbajal

Salud O. Carbajal
Member of Congress

/s/ Jimmy Panetta

Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

/s/ Jeffrey A. Merkley

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

/s/ Thomas R. Carper

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

/s/ Sheldon Whitehouse

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

/s/ Dianne Feinstein

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

/s/ Chris Van Hollen

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/ Edward J. Markey

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/ Cory A. Booker

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

/s/ Gary C. Peters

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Duckworth

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

/s/ Ron Wyden

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

/s/ Jack Reed

Jack Reed
United States Senator

/s/ Robert Menendez

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

/s/ Richard J. Durbin

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

/s/ Martin Heinrich

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

/s/ Benjamin L. Cardin

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

/s/ Tim Kaine

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

/s/ Peter A. DeFazio

Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

/s/ Raúl M. Grijalva

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

/s/ Alan Lowenthal

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

/s/ Grace F. Napolitano

Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

/s/ Juan Vargas

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

/s/ Bennie G. Thompson

Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress

/s/ Eleanor Holmes Norton

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

/s/ Marcy Kaptur

Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

/s/ Ann McLane Kuster

Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

/s/ Cori Bush

Cori Bush
Member of Congress

/s/ Alcee L. Hastings

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

/s/ Mark Pocan

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

/s/ Filemon Vela

Filemon Vela
Member of Congress

/s/ Jan Schakowsky

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

/s/ Grace F. Meng

Grace F. Meng
Member of Congress

/s/ Tony Cárdenas

Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress

/s/ Lucille Roybal-Allard

Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

/s/ Ro Khanna

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

/s/ Frank Pallone, Jr.

Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/ Debbie Dingell

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

/s/ Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

/s/ David Cicilline

David Cicilline
Member of Congress

/s/ Tom O'Halleran

Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress

/s/ Jackie Speier

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

/s/ Suzanne Bonamici

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

/s/ Anna G. Eshoo

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

/s/ Sheila Jackson Lee

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

/s/ Bill Foster

Bill Foster
Member of Congress

/s/ Earl Blumenauer

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

/s/ Henry C. "Hank" Johnson Jr.

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/ Thomas R. Suozzi

Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

/s/ Peter Welch

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

/s/ Albio Sires

Albio Sires
Member of Congress

/s/ David Scott

David Scott
Member of Congress

/s/ Haley Stevens

Haley Stevens
Member of Congress

/s/ James R. Langevin

James R. Langevin
Member of Congress

/s/ Mondaire Jones

Mondaire Jones
Member of Congress

/s/ Steve Cohen

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

/s/ Ed Case

Ed Case
Member of Congress