

Monarch-related Stewardship Events Planning Resources

This resource will provide information on planning and implementing 3 basic types of monarch-related stewardship events. The size and complexity of your event depends on your staff, location, resources, etc. These can be simple events or part of a larger festival or other on- or off-site event. Take as much or as little information as you need for YOUR event!

The three stewardship event types are:

- Milkweed planting
- Monarch tagging
- Seed collecting (with seed cleaning instructions, although this would not be part of the event)

Materials/information included for each event type:

- General planning and implementation information – audience, location, logistics, volunteer coordination
- Sample promotional materials – news release, poster/flyer, email to volunteers
- Sample registration spreadsheet
- List of staff and materials required, along with cost and source information
- Specific details on how to conduct the stewardship activity
- Possible partners and/or extension activities to expand your event

Milkweed Planting Event

General planning and implementation information – audience, location, logistics, volunteer coordination

The first step in planning any event is to choose your audience. Most likely, you will look for volunteers to help with the planting. Decide what type of volunteers you are targeting (although this may have been decided first, if a group has approached you about doing a project!). Think about where you want to plant, and if you want to plant milkweed seeds (perhaps collected at a previous event) or seedlings. Find a source for these seeds or seedlings, if you do not have one already. Consider how, or if, you will prepare the planting site, how big it is, and how many volunteers you will need or can manage.

If you are planting milkweed in among existing plants (in a garden or prairie), you will plan a different kind of event than if you are planting a monarch garden or a milkweed patch. If you are creating a whole new garden with a variety of native plants, it's helpful to create a plan (using information from the fact sheets) and a map for that garden. These maps will be useful on planting day, so volunteers and staff know where everything should go.

When recruiting volunteers, you can advertise using news releases, posters or flyers, and/or an email to a specific group. Samples of all these materials are below. Remember that ALL volunteers will need to have a signed Volunteer Service Agreement in order to participate. It makes the actual event less

chaotic to have people fill these out in advance, and bring them with them. Consider emailing the forms to participants when they sign up (if you have them sign up; you can also do the event like an open house), along with instructions on which portions to complete (for example, if some volunteers are under 18). If you have the forms on your website, you can also simply direct them to that site. Think about what volunteers will need to bring with them, and advise them accordingly when they contact you to sign up. Will they need water or lunch? Are those provided? Any equipment or materials (such as gloves) they should bring? What sort of clothing and footwear is appropriate?

When volunteers contact you to sign up, be sure to get their contact information in case anything changes at the last minute – weather (do you have a rain date? Or is it rain or shine?), staff suddenly unable to come, etc. If your event will include families or groups with adults and children, it is helpful to ask and note how many children and how many adults are coming, as well as the ages of any children. A sample registration spreadsheet is attached. . You could also invite the public to just come anytime in a given time frame, like an open house, and have staff/trained volunteers/partners available to help them plant a small number of milkweed on their own schedule. This would not require people to sign up ahead of time, but would require them to fill out the Volunteer Service Agreement when they arrive and prior to participating.

Consider how you will organize the volunteers and staff during the actual event. If it's a small group, this won't be a consideration for you. But if it's a large group, how will you divide them up? A suggestion is to group like-ages together, or all the families in one group. How will they know which group they are in, and who's their leader? One way to do this is to have volunteers check in upon arrival at the site. They turn in their forms, which are checked to insure they are signed. They have been pre-assigned (by you) to a color group, and receive a sticky dot (like those used at garage sales to price items) in that color. Sticking it on their shirt/jacket helps them remember which group they are in. Their leader also has a dot, or could even have that color shirt or hat if not a uniformed Service employee. There are surely other ways to coordinate groups – this is just one example.

It is helpful to begin the event with everyone all together (even if it's a very large group). Spend just a few minutes welcoming them and orienting them to the project site (restrooms, water, etc.). Explain the task for the day, and be sure to talk about why you are doing this and how it's benefiting monarchs. You could adapt the sample powerpoint for this purpose, create a new one, use posters, or just explain it. This does not have to take long, but helps provide some context and lets the volunteers know that what they're doing is important on a larger scale.

Then divide into groups (if you have them), gather materials and get to work!

Sample promotional materials – news release, poster/flyer, email to volunteers

Attached are an example of a news release for a planting event and a poster or flyer for a planting event. *****

Below is a sample email to volunteers , partners, Friends, scouts, etc. (your target audience), inviting them to participate.

Hi Scout leaders!

I hope this email finds you well! Thank you for your continued support of and interest in Neal Smith NWR. We have a special event coming up this spring, and we would love for you and your scouts to participate!

Milkweed for Monarchs is on Saturday, June 6 from 9:00am-11:00am, at Neal Smith NWR. We need volunteers to help us plant milkweed seedlings around the Visitor Center to provide more breeding spaces, food for caterpillars, and nectar sources for monarch butterflies.

We would really love for scouts to help volunteer for this fun event, where they can learn more about one of Iowa's most interesting animals and help our wildlife! It is wonderful to have so much help from scouts and we appreciate it so much. If you could please forward this message to other leaders you think would be interested in attending, we would really appreciate it.

To sign up for this event, please contact me at megan_wandag@fws.gov or 515-994-3400.

Please let me know if you have any questions or would like more information about this event. I would be happy to help answer them.

Thanks for all your time, effort and help.

Sincerely,

Here is another sample email, replying to someone who has signed up for the event and providing detailed information.

Hi Lloyd,

Thank you very much for your interest in our Milkweed for Monarchs event! I have signed you and your scouts up. Can you let me know the approximate ages of the scouts, as well as how many siblings and adults will be attending? We divide the groups of volunteers up by age and by how many adults/children are in each group, so this information is very helpful. Can I also get a contact phone number for you, just in case of last-minute changes? Thank you!

In order to participate as volunteers, we will need you and each member of your group to complete a volunteer service agreement form. You can find the forms on our website at http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Neal_Smith/what_we_do/get_involved/volunteer_applications.html. Scroll down to the "**Volunteer Services Agreement**" (NOT the volunteer application); there are also links to examples of how to fill out the form for adults and children under the age of 18. In order to participate, all of your group members will need to either fill out their own form (for adults) or have their guardian fill out and sign their child's Volunteer Service Agreement form. Please print out and bring the signed and completed forms with you on the day of the event. If you have any questions about the form, please do not hesitate to call (515-994-3400) or email me (megan_wandag@fws.gov). I would be happy to help!

On the day of the event, try to get here at 9:00am, so that we can process your paperwork and begin to pass out materials. The event will end at noon, and then the Friends of Neal Smith NWR will provide

lunch for all the volunteers. Please dress for the weather, with sunscreen, long pants, long sleeves, a hat, and bring a reusable water bottle if possible. We will provide gloves and any necessary tools.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call or email me anytime. We look forward to seeing you on April 19; thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

Sample registration spreadsheet

Attached is a sample registration spreadsheet that is filled in as volunteers sign up for the event. You will notice it's color coded, and there are additional sheets for each color group. It is easiest to divide people into groups and populate the color-group sheets once everyone has signed up, based on age, families, type of group or participant, etc. Or you can divide them up another way – this is just one example.

List of staff and materials required, along with cost and source information

You will need enough staff and/or trained volunteers (your “regular” volunteers who know the task and your refuge already) to manage and supervise all of the volunteers. This number depends greatly on the size of your volunteer group. Generally with younger participants, you will want to have at least one adult (which could be a parent, scout leader, staff person, trained volunteer, etc.) for every 5-8 children (more with younger kids, less with older kids). With groups of adults, one staff person or trained volunteer for every 20-30 adults would probably be adequate.

Materials required for a planting event include:

- Seeds or seedlings (see below for more information), in sufficient quantity to plant your project area. To find milkweed seeds in your state, visit this website: <http://www.xerces.org/milkweed-seed-finder/> Your cost will depend on plant species, seed vs. seedling, and quantity needed.
- Digging tools , such as trowels or dibbles (talk to your grower about how the plants come) – Trowels can be purchased at many stores and online businesses, for \$8+ (I'd recommend spending more for metal ones; plastic breaks easily). Dibbles available online from Terra Tech for \$75 each.
- Gardening gloves (optional, or could ask participants to bring their own) – you can purchase cotton gloves on GSA Advantage, or from any number of garden supply stores (both online and brick-and-mortar). You can purchase gloves for as little as \$1-3 online.
- Knee pads or kneeling mats – you can purchase online or in a variety of stores for as little as \$5 each.
- Hose or watering can and water source to water seedlings - watering cans available online or in a variety of stores for as little as \$8

- Plant labels or signs (optional, if you want to follow up with interpretation) – available at garden stores, range from simple wooden sticks to metal stakes with engraved labels, at a wide variety of costs.
- Flagging tape, stakes, etc. to delineate planting area (if small or not obvious) – you likely already have something that can be used here
- Garden plan/map, if needed for your site and project – you will have created this during planning, but should provide copies for each participant or group leader
- If drinking water is not available at your site, bring coolers with water and cups or reusable water bottles (can also ask participants to bring their own water bottle).

Specific details on how to conduct the stewardship activity

There are two ways you can plant milkweed. Which you choose will depend on your site and your audience. You can either plant seeds or seedlings, which you may have grown in a greenhouse or purchased/obtained in some other fashion from another source. Bear in mind that, for volunteers, the instant gratification of planting seedlings can be very powerful. But for some sites, planting seeds may be the way to go.

Before you begin, identify the planting area using a map, stakes, flagging tape, etc. so everyone is clear on where the plants/seeds are to go. Be sure all the tools are on hand at the project site, or where your volunteers are gathering (if that's a different location).

In order to plant seeds with volunteers, hold your event in the fall. Give each volunteer a supply of seeds or a seed mix in some type of easy-to-carry container (bucket, bag, pouch, etc.). Have them scatter the seeds on the surface of bare soil and press down firmly so the seeds have contact with the soil. This is easily done by walking (or dancing!) on the surface after seeds have been scattered. Be sure volunteers are only seeding an area once – give each person a specific section to do. Be sure seeds are scattered fairly widely, because milkweeds and most native plants need plenty of space to grow. They will spread below ground as well. No watering is necessary if you are planting seeds – nature will do the rest!

In order to plant seedlings with volunteers, set plants out (or have volunteers do this as well) in the planting area in the general location where each plant will go. Pass out trowels and knee pads or kneeling mats to each volunteer, or dibbles if you are planting seedlings from containers. Instruct them to dig small holes for each plant, the right size for whatever pot your seedlings come in. Remove the seedlings from the pots, place them in the hole, and then tamp the extra soil back in around the plants. Plant them 6-24 inches apart, depending on the species you are planting. Your grower will have more information. Instruct volunteers to be careful not to step on those that have already been planted – they are small and sometimes hard to see if you're not paying attention. You can label the plants as they go in the ground, if desired. Water the plants once they are all planted.

Possible partners and/or extension activities to expand your event

To do a milkweed planting event, you may want to seek out partners to help actually conduct the event, manage or instruct volunteers, etc. You may also want to look for partners who can provide or help you

grow milkweed to be planted. In the first case, your usual group of partners, Friends, community supporters, etc. will work fine. You may need to meet with them prior to the start of the event to give them extra instructions about what your expectations are and how to actually conduct the activity. You could also possibly provide this information in written form before the event.

In the second case, possible partners could be garden centers, nurseries, native plant enthusiasts (for example, a native plant society), garden clubs, Master Gardeners, or others involved in the growing of plants. Visit this website: <http://www.xerces.org/milkweed-seed-finder/> and search for milkweed seed or plant sources in your state. You can contact them to invite them to partner or donate plants/seeds.

If you would like to hold a larger event, and have milkweed planting be a part of it (for example, a migration festival or pollinator or monarch celebration), you can add other activities, exhibitors, talks, movie showings, craft tables, etc. Please see the section of this manual with other interpretive and event activity ideas to help you plan some things for your specific need. You can also provide snacks and/or a meal for your volunteers, by partnering with a Friends group or other organization.

Monarch Tagging Event

General planning and implementation information – audience, location, logistics, volunteer coordination

The first step in planning any event is to choose your audience. Most likely, you will look for volunteers to tag the monarchs. Decide what type of volunteers you are targeting (although this may have been decided first, if a group has approached you about doing a project!). Think about where you are likely to find monarchs, and what time of year would be best for tagging (this is only done in the fall, but timing will depend on your geographic location). Consider how many volunteers you will need or can manage.

When recruiting volunteers, you can advertise using news releases, posters or flyers, and/or an email to a specific group. Samples of all these materials are below. Remember that ALL volunteers will need to have a signed Volunteer Service Agreement in order to participate. It makes the actual event less chaotic to have people fill these out in advance, and bring them with them. Consider emailing the forms to participants when they sign up (if you have them sign up; you can also do the event like an open house), along with instructions on which portions to complete (for example, if some volunteers are under 18). If you have the forms on your website, you can also simply direct them to that site. Think about what volunteers will need to bring with them, and advise them accordingly when they contact you to sign up. Will they need water or lunch? Are those provided? Any equipment or materials (such as gloves) they should bring? What sort of clothing and footwear is appropriate?

When volunteers contact you to sign up, be sure to get their contact information in case anything changes at the last minute – weather (do you have a rain date? Or is it rain or shine?), staff suddenly unable to come, etc. If your event will include families or groups with adults and children, it is helpful to ask and note how many children and how many adults are coming, as well as the ages of any children. A

sample registration spreadsheet is attached. You could also invite the public to just come anytime in a given time frame, like an open house, and have staff/trained volunteers/partners available to help them tag one or more monarchs on their own schedule. This would not require people to sign up ahead of time, but would require them to fill out the Volunteer Service Agreement when they arrive and prior to participating.

Consider how you will organize the volunteers and staff during the actual event. If it's a small group, this won't be a consideration for you. But if it's a large group, how will you divide them up? A suggestion is to group like-ages together, or all the families in one group. How will they know which group they are in, and who's their leader? One way to do this is to have volunteers check in upon arrival at the site. They turn in their forms, which are checked to insure they are signed. They have been pre-assigned (by you) to a color group, and receive a sticky dot (like those used at garage sales to price items) in that color. Sticking it on their shirt/jacket helps them remember which group they are in. Their leader also has a dot, or could even have that color shirt or hat if not a uniformed Service employee. There are surely other ways to coordinate groups – this is just one suggestion.

It is helpful to begin the event with everyone all together (even if it's a very large group), unless you are using an open house format. Spend just a few minutes welcoming them and orienting them to the project site (restrooms, water, etc.). Explain the task for the day, and be sure to talk about why you are doing this and how it's benefiting monarchs. Attached is an example of a powerpoint used to introduce a monarch tagging event, which you can use as-is, adapt, create a new one, or simply use posters or a short explanation instead of a presentation. This does not have to take long, but helps provide instruction, some context and lets the volunteers know that what they're doing is important on a larger scale.

Then divide into groups (if you have them), gather materials and get to work!

Sample promotional materials – news release, poster/flyer, email to volunteers

Attached are an example of a news release for a monarch tagging event and a poster or flyer for a monarch tagging event.

Below is a sample email to volunteers , partners, Friends, scouts, etc. (your target audience), inviting them to participate.

Hi Scout leaders!

I hope this email finds you well! Thank you for your continued support of and interest in Neal Smith NWR. We have a special event coming up this fall, and we would love for you and your scouts to participate!

Monarch Madness is on Saturday, September 6 from 9:00am-11:00am, at Neal Smith NWR. We need volunteers to help us catch, tag, and release monarch butterflies. The data collected for this event will be submitted to Monarch Watch, so scientists can learn more about monarchs' fascinating migration. Registration is limited to the first 100 participants – be aware, we fill up quickly!

We would really love for scouts to help volunteer for this fun event, where they can learn more about one of Iowa's most interesting animals and help our wildlife! It is wonderful to have so much help from scouts and we appreciate it so much. If you could please forward this message to other leaders you think would be interested in attending, we would really appreciate it.

To sign up for this event, please contact me at megan_wandag@fws.gov or 515-994-3400.

Please let me know if you have any questions or would like more information about this event. I would be happy to help answer them.

Thanks for all your time, effort and help.

Sincerely,

Here is another sample email, replying to someone who has signed up for the event and providing detailed information.

Hi Lauren,

Thank you so much for your interest in our Monarch Madness event! There are still spaces available, so I've signed up you and your group. The only information I still need is, if any of your group members are children, the ages of the child(ren).

In order to participate, we will need each member of your group to complete a volunteer service agreement. You can find the forms on our website at http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Neal_Smith/what_we_do/get_involved/volunteer_application.html. Scroll down to the "**Volunteer Services Agreement**" (NOT the Volunteer Application); there are also links to examples of how to fill out the form for adults and children under the age of 18. In order to participate, all of your group members will need to either fill out their own form (for adults) or have their guardian fill out and sign their child's Volunteer Service Agreement form. Please print out and bring the signed and completed forms with you on the day of the event. If you have any questions about the form, please do not hesitate to call (515-994-3400) or email me (megan_wandag@fws.gov). I would be happy to help!

On the day of the event, try to get here a little before 9:00am, so that we can process your paperwork and begin to pass out materials. Please wear sunscreen, long pants, long sleeves, a hat, and bring a reusable water bottle if possible. We may be venturing into the prairie to capture the monarchs!

Thanks again for volunteering. We really appreciate it!

Sample registration spreadsheet

Attached is a sample registration spreadsheet that is filled in as volunteers sign up for the event. You will notice it's color coded, and there are additional sheets for each color group. It is easiest to divide people into groups and populate the color-group sheets once everyone has signed up, based on age, families, type of group or participant, etc. Or you can divide them up another way – this is just one example.

List of staff and materials required, along with cost and source information

You will need enough staff and/or trained volunteers (your “regular” volunteers who know the task and your refuge already) to manage and supervise all of the volunteers. This number depends greatly on the size of your volunteer group. Generally with younger participants, you will want to have at least one adult (which could be a parent, scout leader, staff person, trained volunteer, etc.) for every 5-8 children (more with younger kids, less with older kids). With groups of adults, one staff person or trained volunteer for every 20-30 adults would probably be adequate.

Materials required for a monarch tagging event include:

- Tags for the monarchs – purchase from Monarch Watch (<http://www.monarchwatch.org/tagmig/tag.htm>). Cost ranges from \$15-105, depending on how many tags you buy. The kit comes with a data sheet you can photocopy, and tagging instructions.
- Clipboards, data sheets and pencils to record data on all tagged monarchs (one per group of volunteers, if more than one group). Clipboards and pencils are available on GSA Advantage, if you don't already have a small supply in your office.
- Butterfly nets – good quality and value nets available from Acorn Naturalists for \$19.95 here: <http://www.acornnaturalists.com/store/FIELD-INSECT-NET-12-AERIAL-P2266C0.aspx>

Specific details on how to conduct the stewardship activity

Monarch tagging is very easy, and safe for the monarchs as long as the people doing the tagging are careful and understand the process. It works best to have a staff person or trained volunteer do the tagging, for this reason.

The first step to tag a monarch is to catch one. Wait for them to land on a flower, and then carefully put the net over them. It sometimes helps to hold the net sideways (with a low profile), and of course move quietly and calmly. Jumping and waving your net will just scare them away. Once you have a monarch in your net, close the mesh part above where the monarch is so it can't fly away. Carry the netted monarch to the person who has the tags (be sure everyone knows where this person or people is/are).

The staff person will carefully remove the monarch from the net. Tickling the feet sometimes helps to detach them from the mesh. Hold the monarch in one hand with wings closed, and stick a tag on. Instructions on where to place the tag come with the tagging kit from Monarch Watch. They also provide data sheets for photocopying. Recording data is simple – the tag number, date, if it's a male or female, wild caught or raised, and who did the tagging. At an event, take down the participant's name or group leader's name, so you can contact them if the monarch is recaptured at a later time.

A couple of things to watch for – know the difference between monarchs and viceroys (which have an extra horizontal line or vein on hindwings, making a “smile” or “v”). Viceroys are also smaller, but this takes practice to distinguish. Also, know the difference between males and females. Males have a spot or bump on one vein on each of the hindwings, while females have smooth, straight veins. Help

participants see these features as you tag the monarch. This is also a great opportunity to explain some of the monarch and butterfly characteristics!

Once tagging is done, release the monarch. It's fun to let the person who caught it release it. You can simply place it on their open palm, on their nose, shirt, etc. Once you let go, it may sit for a second before flying away.

Possible partners and/or extension activities to expand your event

To do a monarch tagging event, you may want to seek out partners to help actually conduct the event, manage or instruct volunteers, etc. Your usual group of partners, Friends, community supporters, etc. will work fine. You may need to meet with them prior to the start of the event to give them extra instructions about what your expectations are and how to actually tag the monarchs and/or record the data, if this is what you will have them doing. You could also possibly provide this information in written form before the event.

If you would like to hold a larger event, and have monarch tagging be a part of it (for example, a migration festival or pollinator or monarch celebration), you can add other activities, exhibitors, talks, movie showings, craft tables, etc. Please see the section of this manual with other interpretive and event activity ideas to help you plan some things for your specific need. You can also provide snacks and/or a meal for your volunteers, by partnering with a Friends group or other organization.

Seed Collecting Event

General planning and implementation information – audience, location, logistics, volunteer coordination

The first step in planning any event is to choose your audience. Most likely, you will look for volunteers to collect the seed. Decide what type of volunteers you are targeting (although this may have been decided first, if a group has approached you about doing a project!). Think about where you have the most of your desired seed(s) or where the highest diversity is, but also consider ease of access for volunteers. Plan your event for the time of year when most of your targeted species are likely to be in seed (this is only done in the fall, but timing will depend on your geographic location). Consider how many volunteers you will need or can manage.

When recruiting volunteers, you can advertise using news releases, posters or flyers, and/or an email to a specific group. Samples of all these materials are below. Remember that ALL volunteers will need to have a signed Volunteer Service Agreement in order to participate. It makes the actual event less chaotic to have people fill these out in advance, and bring them with them. Consider emailing the forms to participants when they sign up (if you have them sign up; you can also do the event like an open house), along with instructions on which portions to complete (for example, if some volunteers are under 18). If you have the forms on your website, you can also simply direct them to that site. Think

about what volunteers will need to bring with them, and advise them accordingly when they contact you to sign up. Will they need water or lunch? Are those provided? Any equipment or materials (such as gloves) they should bring? What sort of clothing and footwear is appropriate?

When volunteers contact you to sign up, be sure to get their contact information in case anything changes at the last minute – weather (do you have a rain date? Or is it rain or shine?), staff suddenly unable to come, etc. If your event will include families or groups with adults and children, it is helpful to ask and note how many children and how many adults are coming, as well as the ages of any children. A sample registration spreadsheet is attached. You could also invite the public to just come anytime in a given time frame, like an open house, and have staff/trained volunteers/partners available to help them collect seed from a particular species on their own schedule. This would not require people to sign up ahead of time, but would require them to fill out the Volunteer Service Agreement when they arrive and prior to participating.

Consider how you will organize the volunteers and staff during the actual event. If it's a small group, this won't be a consideration for you. But if it's a large group, how will you divide them up? A suggestion is to group like-ages together, or all the families in one group. How will they know which group they are in, and who's their leader? One way to do this is to have volunteers check in upon arrival at the site. They turn in their forms, which are checked to insure they are signed. They have been pre-assigned (by you) to a color group, and receive a sticky dot (like those used at garage sales to price items) in that color. Sticking it on their shirt/jacket helps them remember which group they are in. Their leader also has a dot, or could even have that color shirt or hat if not a uniformed Service employee. There are surely other ways to coordinate groups – this is just one suggestion.

It is helpful to begin the event with everyone all together (even if it's a very large group), unless you are using an open house format. Spend just a few minutes welcoming them and orienting them to the project site (restrooms, water, etc.). Explain the task for the day, and be sure to talk about why you are doing this and how it's benefiting monarchs. This does not have to take long, but helps provide instruction, some context and lets the volunteers know that what they're doing is important on a larger scale.

Then divide into groups (if you have them), gather materials and get to work!

Sample promotional materials – news release, poster/flyer, email to volunteers

Attached are an example of a news release for a seed collecting event and a poster or flyer for a seed collecting event.

Below is a sample email to volunteers , partners, Friends, scouts, etc. (your target audience), inviting them to participate.

Hi Scout leaders!

I hope this email finds you well! Thank you for your continued support of and interest in Neal Smith NWR. We have a special event coming up this fall, and we would love for you and your scouts to participate!

Ding Darling Day will be held on Saturday, October 12 from 9am-12pm. In honor of Iowan J.N. "Ding" Darling, a pioneer conservationist, the refuge is hosting stewardship opportunities for you and your group. We need volunteers to help restore the prairie ecosystem by collecting seeds. A FREE lunch will be provided at noon by the Friends of Neal Smith NWR.

We would really love for scouts to help volunteer for this fun event, where they can learn more about Iowa's native prairie and help our wildlife! It is wonderful to have so much help from scouts and we appreciate it so much. If you could please forward this message to other leaders you think would be interested in attending, we would really appreciate it.

To sign up for this event, please contact me at megan_wandag@fws.gov or 515-994-3400.

Please let me know if you have any questions or would like more information about this event. I would be happy to help answer them.

Thanks for all your time, effort and help.

Sincerely,

Here is another sample email, replying to someone who has signed up for the event and providing detailed information.

Hi Lauren,

Thank you so much for your interest in our Ding Darling Day event! There are still spaces available, so I've signed up you and your group. The only information I still need is, if any of your group members are children, the ages of the child(ren).

In order to participate, we will need each member of your group to complete a volunteer service agreement. You can find the forms on our website at http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Neal_Smith/what_we_do/get_involved/volunteer_applications.html. Scroll down to the "**Volunteer Services Agreement**" (NOT the Volunteer Application); there are also links to examples of how to fill out the form for adults and children under the age of 18. In order to participate, all of your group members will need to either fill out their own form (for adults) or have their guardian fill out and sign their child's Volunteer Service Agreement form. Please print out and bring the signed and completed forms with you on the day of the event. If you have any questions about the form, please do not hesitate to call (515-994-3400) or email me (megan_wandag@fws.gov). I would be happy to help!

On the day of the event, try to get here a little before 9:00am, so that we can process your paperwork and begin to pass out materials. Please wear sunscreen, long pants, long sleeves, a hat, and bring a reusable water bottle if possible. We may be venturing into the prairie to collect a variety of seeds!

Thanks again for volunteering. We really appreciate it!

Sample registration spreadsheet

Attached is a sample registration spreadsheet that is filled in as volunteers sign up for the event. You will notice it's color coded, and there are additional sheets for each color group. It is easiest to divide people into groups and populate the color-group sheets once everyone has signed up, based on age, families, type of group or participant, etc. Or you can divide them up another way – this is just one example.

List of staff and materials required, along with cost and source information

You will need enough staff and/or trained volunteers (your “regular” volunteers who know the task and your refuge already) to manage and supervise all of the volunteers. This number depends greatly on the size of your volunteer group. Generally with younger participants, you will want to have at least one adult (which could be a parent, scout leader, staff person, trained volunteer, etc.) for every 5-8 children (more with younger kids, less with older kids). With groups of adults, one staff person or trained volunteer for every 20-30 adults would probably be adequate.

Materials required for a seed collecting event include:

- Buckets and/or paper bags to collect the seed in, and pencils to write the species on the bags. Reused ice cream or 5 gallon buckets and lunch bags work well. Ask staff/volunteers to collect extra buckets ahead of time. You can purchase lunch bags for as little as \$2-5 at many retailers.
- Gloves, if collecting prickly or rough seeds - you can purchase cotton or leather gloves on GSA Advantage, or from any number of garden supply stores (both online and brick-and-mortar). You can purchase gloves for as little as \$1-3 online.
- Hand pruners, if collecting seeds that come in clusters and are easier to remove as a cluster. You can purchase pruners from GSA Advantage or from any garden supply store, for as little as \$6-9
- Seed or plant ID guides, if necessary for the scope of your project – you likely have these already, if you need them
- A place to dry/store seeds once the event concludes (i.e. large aluminum roasting pans)

Note that seeds will need to be cleaned and prepared for planting after this event is over. You can also enlist the help of volunteers to clean the seed, although it may not be part of an event. Seed cleaning can require other, more specialized (and more expensive) equipment such as sieves in various sizes, a Dakota blower, etc. It can also sometimes be done with inexpensive equipment like rolling pins and bare hands, depending on the species and quantity. While this is beyond the scope of event planning, it's something to consider. Simply collecting a lot of seed is not the end of the process.

Specific details on how to conduct the stewardship activity

Seed collection is very simple to do. The hardest part is positively identifying the plants to collect from. Staff and trained volunteers may find this easy, but there are also field guides available to help. Neal Smith NWR has created a seed collecting ID guide for many common tallgrass prairie species; contact them for details or for an electronic copy.

Be prepared by scouting your seed collecting site ahead of time. Be sure your target species is/are somewhat common and worth your volunteers' time collecting, and be sure it is ripe. Know any hazards or trouble spots (look-a-like plants, for example) ahead of time, so you can point them out.

The actual collection technique depends a little on the species, but generally you can either simply pull off the seeds with your hands and put them in a bucket or bag, or you can use pruners to clip off the seed cluster/pod. Pruners work best for collecting milkweed pods, specifically, but it can be done by hand as well if your volunteers are children. Be sure that whatever container the seeds go into is labeled clearly with the species of plant. Using paper bags makes this very easy, especially if your group will collect several species. Just write the name on the side of the bag.

Logistically, it works best for volunteers to collect just one species at a time. If you have a larger group and want to collect many species, have them work in pairs or small groups and give a different species to each pair. If they finish one, they can take on another species, but it's hard to keep a lookout for more than one species at a time.

Once the seed has been collected, it should be stored in some type of open, shallow container so it can fully dry. Again, label it carefully and clearly. This may be easiest to have the staff and/or trained volunteers do, rather than the larger group of volunteers. As noted above, you will then need to clean the seed (at a later time) and prepare it for planting.

Possible partners and/or extension activities to expand your event

To do a seed collecting event, you may want to seek out partners to help actually conduct the event, manage or instruct volunteers, etc. Your usual group of partners, Friends, community supporters, etc. will work fine. You may need to meet with them prior to the start of the event to give them extra instructions about what your expectations are and how to actually identify and collect the species of seeds you plan to target. You could also possibly provide this information in written form before the event.

If you would like to hold a larger event, and have seed collecting be a part of it (for example, a pollinator or monarch celebration, National Public Lands Day, Refuge Week celebration, etc.), you can add other activities, exhibitors, talks, movie showings, craft tables, etc. Please see the section of this manual with other interpretive and event activity ideas to help you plan some things for your specific need. You can also provide snacks and/or a meal for your volunteers, by partnering with a Friends group or other organization.