



Species Status Assessment: *Monarch Butterfly*

Endangered Species Act Petition

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service received a petition to list the monarch butterfly under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) on August 26, 2014. On December 31, 2014, we made an initial (90-day) finding that the petition contains enough information for us to determine that a status review was appropriate. We are currently gathering information to determine whether the monarch needs protection under the ESA. During this time, conservation efforts are also underway to help provide food and habitat for monarchs across the landscape. The ESA process will occur concurrently with the conservation effort already underway.

Species Status Assessment and Status Review

Between now and June 2019, the Service will develop a status review using the Species Status Assessment (SSA) framework as the scientific foundation for our policy decision.

The SSA provides the best available scientific information for comparison



Monarch butterfly on a purple coneflower by Jim Hudgins/USFWS.

to policy standards to guide ESA decisions. The SSA will identify the species needs (at an individual, population and species level), gather information on the current status, threats or stressors to the species, and conservation efforts that may influence threats, and project future status of the species based on analysis of this information.

When complete, the SSA will provide a single source for species' biological

information needed for all ESA decisions (e.g., listing, consultations, grant allocations, permitting, HCPs, and recovery planning).

When the status review is completed, we will make one of three possible determinations:

- Listing is warranted; we would then propose the monarch for listing as either endangered or threatened. At this time we would also consider whether we would propose critical habitat and whether a 4(d) rule is appropriate.
- Listing is not warranted. The ESA process ends.
- Listing is warranted but precluded by species of higher priority. We would propose listing at a later date. We would review our finding each year, considering new information, until we either propose to list or determine that listing is not warranted.

As we go through this process, information related to the biology,



Monarch nearly ready to emerge by Tina Shaw/USFWS

range, population trends, habitat requirements, etc. may be needed from our partners as we develop the analysis. We will continue to seek the best available information for determining the monarch's status. Early identification of what most influences the species' condition affords timely opportunities to work with partners to implement conservation efforts in advance of potential decisions under the ESA.

Timing of the SSA process

- November 2016 - Check-in: Information webinars for states and tribes
- January 2017 - Check-in: Meet in Texas with 16 states
- March 2017 - Check-in: Provide information useful in designing conservation plans prior to North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference
- Early spring 2018 - Peer review of Draft Species Status Assessment Report

- Early summer 2018 - Collect information from states on formal conservation efforts for use in listing analysis

- June 2019 - Listing decision is due

Conservation

International conservation efforts to protect and restore monarch habitat are ongoing. These activities may improve the status of the species. In 2015, we dedicated \$2 million toward monarch conservation and \$4 million in support starting in FY16 and for the next four years to enhance and expand our conservation efforts with the help of our many partners.

Policy for Evaluation of Conservation Efforts When Making Listing Decisions

The policy provides guidance in determining whether recent conservation efforts make listing a species unnecessary or form a basis for listing a species as threatened rather than endangered. It also provides information to groups interested in developing agreements or plans that would contribute to making it

unnecessary to list a species under the ESA.

Candidate Conservation Agreements and Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances

Candidate Conservation Agreements are voluntary agreements between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and one or more public or private parties to conserve candidate species and species-at-risk. We work with partners to identify threats to these species, plan the measures needed to address the threats, identify willing landowners, develop agreements, and design and implement conservation measures and monitor their effectiveness. Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances provide incentives for non-federal property owners to engage in voluntary conservation activities that can help make listing a species unnecessary. A CCAA provides participating property owners with a permit containing assurances that if they engage in certain conservation actions for species included in the agreement, they will not be required to implement additional conservation measures beyond those in the CCAA.



Monarch Caterpillar on common milkweed by Courtney Celley/USFWS

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September 15, 2016