U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The Patch

Center for Pollinator Conservation
Quarterly newsletter

March 2026

Message from the Director

As we embark on the journey of 2026, I am eager to continue to invest in our people, innovation and collaboration at the Center for Pollinator Conservation. Our focus for this year is centered on four key areas:

- Strengthening internal alignment
- Defining scalable pollinator habitat frameworks
- Leveraging emerging technologies
- Strategically communicating the importance of pollinators and encouraging pollinator habitat as a co-benefit of other conservation efforts

Together, we can make a lasting impact on pollinator conservation and contribute to a healthier, more sustainable future.

-Nicole Alt

Social Network Analysis

The Center is exploring how staff and partners working on pollinator conservation are connectedand to increase efficiencies, leverage capacity and elevate progress.

We are buzzing to share that the second phase of the social network analysis has recently launched. Phase two is a joint survey research effort with the University of Texas at Austin on the social network of pollinator conservation efforts across North America. The goal is to better understand the interconnected network of people, organizations and partnerships that are working to advance collaborative pollinator conservation actions in the United States, Canada and Mexico. Social network analyses can aid in our understanding of the forms and functions of relationships and flow of information and knowledge within the pollinator conservation network.

The project team hope for your voluntary response if invited to participate. In effort to innovate with partners, we look forward to sharing results and supporting efficiencies in collaboration and coordination across sectors to connect pollinator conservation efforts. Learn more about this social science project.

This project is coordinated through the Human Dimensions Branch of the Natural Resources Program Center within the National Wildlife Refuge System in accordance with OMB approval Rev. 09/2025, OMB Control No. 1018-0207.

Center for Pollinator Conservation Investments

Applied Science

- Building on the momentum from the State of the Butterflies in the United States project, we launched the first-ever State of the Bees in the United States project. This effort is a collaboration with University of California – Riverside, led by Dr. Hollis Woodard and Dr. Oscar Martinez, alongside Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation and several state agency partners. This multi-year effort seeks to assess the status and risk for approximately 2000 native bee species and to ultimately inform priority places for inventory, monitoring and conservation delivery across the National Wildlife Refuge System and beyond.

- Monarch butterfly radio tagging efforts are underway. A continental-scale collaborative effort is working to track spring migration using a new kind of Bluetooth-enabled transmitter, called BlūMorpho, developed by Cellular Tracking Technologies. More than 150 tags are being deployed at Mexico overwintering sites in February. Similar efforts are underway in California and will ramp up soon in Florida too, providing new insights into the movement patterns of individual butterflies on their journeys across the continent. The Project Monarch Science app allows you to follow the movement of individual butterflies. Stay tuned to future updates as the Center is actively coordinating this project with our partners, developing guidance for interested field staff in participating and working to ensure these efforts address applied conservation priorities for monarchs and other pollinators.

Engagement

- Center staff participated in discussions and shared knowledge on the Endangered Species Act and listed species, including plants and pollinators during a farm tour hosted by the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants and the Weed Science Society of America in North Carolina and Virginia. Attendees gained insights into various crops, advanced harvesting methods, cover crops, nutrient recycling and modern conservation practices. The tour also featured a panel on ESA mitigation. Important results included enhanced relationships and exploring ways to support ESA implementation that balances conservation efforts and farm sustainability.

People in a North Carolina soybean field scouting for pests and identifying beneficial insects as part of a collaborative farm tour focused on sustainable agriculture practices. Photo courtesy of National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants.

Center for Pollinator Conservation Investments

Engagement

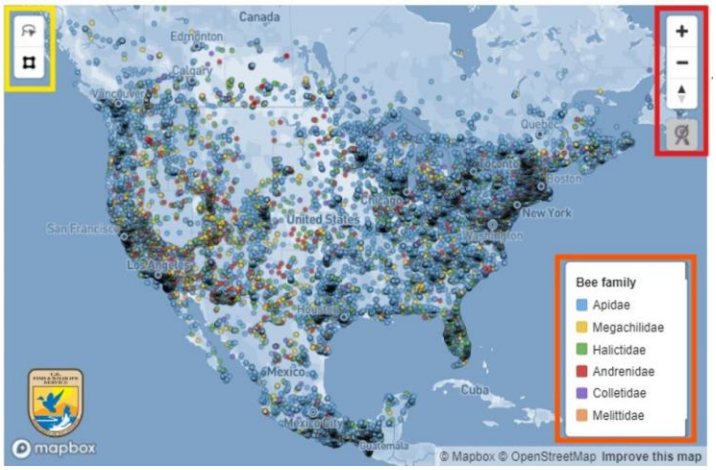
- Building on our successful partnerships, we are organizing two workshops in 2026 with tribal partners. The first, "Caring for Pollinators Together," will be in May at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, focusing on Alaska's pollinators. The second, "Pollinator Relatives Workshop," will be in June in Washington, aiming to enhance pollinator stewardship and create opportunities for Tribal youth. Key partners include the Wildlife Conservation Society, Native American Fish and Wildlife Society, Tribal Alliance for Pollinators and other tribal and non-profit organizations.

- The Center's 2025 annual report demonstrates how we advanced practical, science-based solutions and strong progressive partnerships that helped pollinators and the habitats they need. We expanded knowledge on our refuges to improve safety and efficiency and updated shared tools to put better information in more hands. We also improved transparency in the distribution of funds and advanced the nation-wide Pollinator Action Plan. Read more about our accomplishments in 2025.

Collaboration

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is developing a California-wide monarch and pollinator conservation benefit agreement in partnership with a variety of agricultural producers. This landscape-scale agreement focuses on pollinator habitat and providing assurances for adjacent farming practices. This agreement has the potential to positively impact priority habitat for western monarch and other imperiled native insect pollinators, including multiple species of bumble bees across a variety of crop types including almonds, strawberries, and wine grapes.

- The North American Bee Distribution Tool offers a comprehensive, user-friendly way for you to assess bee species richness and prioritize conservation efforts across the lands you manage. Managed by the Center, it integrates species occurrence data and conservation status rankings to guide effective conservation strategies.



- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service unveils National Agreement to Conserve Bumble Bees Through Energy and Transportation Partnerships. This proposal is an enhancement of survival permit under a nationwide conservation benefit agreement to support at-risk bumble bees on energy and transportation lands across the lower 48 states. The proposal would streamline consultation and permitting for energy and transportation projects and directly supports the Trump administration's priority to facilitate energy production and delivery while conserving listed and at-risk species. The proposed agreement was published in the Federal Register on January 23, 2026. Read the proposed agreement on regulations.gov by searching docket number FWS–R3–ES–2025–0245.

Center for Pollinator Conservation Investments

Inventory and Monitoring, Natural Resources Program Center

- The National Wildlife Refuge System Inventory and Monitoring team is excited to share the 2025 Pollinator Inventory and Monitoring Report. National wildlife refuges in every region collected valuable pollinator survey data in 2025, including establishing baseline inventories in previously un-surveyed locations, evaluating the efficacy of habitat restoration and management techniques, and more. Many of these projects were made possible through collaboration across regions, with partner organizations and with the help of many dedicated interns and volunteers.
- In April, the Joint Bee Lab will host two American Conservation Experience technicians supporting the Southeast Region Pollinator Project. Their week-long visit will focus on technique demonstrations, data management preparation and exploring native bee diversity. They will also develop skills essential for future careers in conservation, while providing critical survey support to alleviate the workload of refuge biologists.
- In March, Clare Maffei and Sam Droege will join Andony Melanthopoulos on Oregon State University's PolliNation podcast to discuss bee identification and the U.S. Geological Survey Bee Lab's collaborative space with our agency. The invitation relates to the Oregon Bee Atlas, a program conducting native bee inventories in our Pacific Region as part of Oregon State University Master Melittology initiative. This engagement strengthens partnerships and showcases our services, fostering collaboration and outreach for pollinator conservation.

Pollinator Community of Practice

- This community-led network of your colleagues who work with, or simply have an interest in, pollinator conservation. We'd love to add you to our community!
- An event calendar was added to the Community of Practice Teams site. This is a place for the leads and members to add pollinator events, such as webinars, outreach and citizen science events, etc.
- Thank you to everyone that joined us for our first webinar of the year, "2025 Postcards from the Field Celebration!" We loved seeing and hearing about all the amazing pollinator efforts you are taking on across the country. Amazing job everyone!
- If you are interested in sharing more details about your efforts on one of our monthly webinars, we want to hear from you. Please reach out to the Pollinator Community of Practice leads to set it up. Email the Pollinator Community of Practice.

Center for Pollinator Conservation

Conserving pollinators with you and for everyone.